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### Anatomy of a fraud: Harry price and the medium rudi schneider

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**Anatomy of a Fraud:  
Harry Price and the Medium Rudi Schneider**

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**Summary**

Among the most interesting of the controversies in the recent history of parapsychology and related studies is the claim made in 1933 by the psychical researcher Harry Price that the medium Rudi Schneider had on one particular occasion produced his psychic effects by fraudulent means. The background to this event, and the controversy which followed it, are described in detail in this article, which draws on many hitherto unpublished materials. The issues involved range from the design of experiments in an unusual area of science, through the relation between fringe and orthodox science, to the role of popularisers of science (such as Harry Price) and the ethics of science.

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**1. Introduction: psychical research**

Psychical research as a systematic and serious study is virtually 100 years old. The Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1882, and has counted among its past presidents some of the most eminent figures in the humanities and sciences. Hundreds of thousands of skilled and learned man-hours have been expended in the pursuit of the elusive phenomena of what has widely come to be known as 'parapsychology'. The American Association for the Advancement of Science has declared the subject to be worthy of academic study. Professorships of parapsychology are gradually being established.

Highly respected scholars and scientists become preoccupied with one or another aspect or claim, and risk—and occasionally retain—their reputations in the process. Meanwhile, the learned world remains deeply divided as to the propriety and importance of a study of phenomena the very definition, let alone authenticity, of which presents problems, and the study of which to date has certainly not, to put it conservatively, contributed to universally acceptable knowledge.

Only relatively recently has the attention of scientists been drawn to some fundamental questions in the history of science which suggest that the progress of science is far from being an ineluctable progress from ignorance to certain knowledge, from supersitition to truth, from darkness to light—that social and psychological factors have played a part in what is, and what is not, accepted and acceptable by a given scientific community at a given time—and that theories and tacit assumptions may colour and at times determine the interpretation of observations. The pursuit of new knowledge, especially when this involves even the possibility of shaking venerable beliefs, is a fairly impassioned affair, and the pursuit of psychical research presents an object lesson in this respect.

Quite often contemporary history cannot be written, not only because of a certain lack of perspective and because much information needed is simply not available, but also because legal complications may render any dispassionate assessment impossible. The laws of slander and libel, for example, may make it difficult or impossible even to describe how certain people behaved—especially if they are wealthy or influential. The picture may stand out more clearly in retrospect and can certainly be told more safely at a later date—which, of course, involves other problems and difficulties of establishing what took place in the more or less distant past.

There is never any shortage of writers willing to believe that current assumptions present the ultimate pinnacles of truth; that iron ships will never float, that without the devil's help light patterns cannot be captured on paper or sound patterns by mechanical devices, that the earth stands still and the sun moves, that machines heavier than air will never fly, that surgical operations without chemical anaesthesia must involve pain and that consequently hypnotic anaesthesia is a fraud, and so on and so forth. It goes without saying that the phenomena of psychical research have met with their fair share of dogmatic *a priori* denial. As Helmholtz so cogently put the matter: 'Neither the testimony of all the Fellows of the Royal Society, nor even the evidence of my own senses, would lead me to believe in the transmission of thought from one person to another independently of the recognised channels of sense'.<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat more recently, Dr. G. R. Price wrote that, since phenomena such as telepathy are impossible, scientists claiming positive results must be either mistaken or fraudulent, and he invoked of all authorities the philosopher Hume to underpin the *a priori* contention that such matters are inherently impossible.<sup>2</sup> Septical empiricists are hardly in a position consistently to pontificate concerning inherent impossibilities: at best what is involved is

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by R. Heywood, *The sixth sense* (1959, London: Chatto & Windus), 11.

<sup>2</sup> G. R. Price, 'Science and the supernatural', *Science*, 122 (1955), 359–367.

probability, or rather plausibility, since the latter word more clearly suggests a general aura of social belief-worthiness for people at a particular epoch. All too often the line taken in controversies concerning some phenomena or other of psychical research are in fact debates with a foregone conclusion in which one or other of the contending parties starts with an entirely unshakeable set of assumptions that, since certain things cannot happen, their occurrence *must* be either delusory or else due to some fraudulent manipulation.

Needless to say, all too often there are quite normal explanations for alleged marvels. Nowhere are mistakes, delusions and hallucinations more likely than in the conditions of the seance room, nor is there any dearth of discoveries of fraud, chicanery and racket. Serious researchers who investigate these matters and who are open to being convinced either of fraud or else of the authenticity of phenomena have to become extremely sophisticated as regards the sources of error in this field and, should they themselves become convinced of the genuineness of phenomena, be prepared for the experience of being themselves accused of fraud and conspiracy. Nowhere is this more the case than in the context of the so-called 'physical phenomena' of psychical research.

Until relatively recently the most fashionable stance in respectable psychical research circles was to accept as authentic the so-called 'mental' phenomena, that is, the 'paranormal' acquisition of information such as telepathy, whilst rejecting the 'paranormal' influencing of material objects, such as table-turning. The position has now changed somewhat. Why the 'mental' phenomena should have seemed so much more securely established than the physical is quite a complicated story, and one far from fully clarified. Certainly most, if not all, of the major *scientific* figures in the field—men like Crookes, Lodge, Richet, Rayleigh, Wallace, Driesch and Barrett—have vouched for the authenticity of at least some 'physical phenomena'. On the whole, opposition has come more from philosophers and divines such as Dr. W. F. Prince, who saw in the 'mental' phenomena support for a more spiritual and religious interpretation of the universe than materialist science appeared to permit, whereas the 'physical' phenomena, with their general boisterous and irreverent atmosphere, might be thought to suggest a more mundane, quasi-biological interpretation. Indeed, this is precisely what scientists such as Richet, Driesch and Schrenck-Notzing believed, although in this they were not necessarily supported by others, such as Alfred Russel Wallace and Sir Oliver Lodge, who accepted the 'physical' phenomena as genuine.

Perhaps William James has described most forcefully the psychological impetus towards disbelief, in his case disbelief in manifestations he had himself observed, vouched for and accepted. He describes how he himself, in excellent light, repeatedly saw a ring moving by up to six inches, and he confessed surprise that this affected him emotionally so little that, four days after the event, his mind seemed strongly inclined not to 'count' the observation. He supposed that this was due to the fact that the experience was too exceptional, and he speculates that it is the frequency rather than the quality of the records that will establish the authenticity of physical phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> G. Murphy and R. O. Ballou (eds.), *William James on psychical research* (1961, London: Chatto & Windus), 90–92.



No doubt the lack of 'frequency' of the 'physical' phenomena is one of the reasons for the relative disbelief that they inspire. Another is the fact that no one has, as yet, devised any set of conditions in which they might be reproduced reliably; and above all, there is the clash between the apparently 'causeless' movement of objects with our current picture of the world, coupled with the absence of a suitable theory, model or formalism to describe, if not explain, the phenomena. So far, psychical research is very much a subject with a strong 'ideographic' and historical dimension, in which the description of particular named persons and designated events play a prominent part. It could well be the case that this will always apply, even if a new cosmology were devised which satisfactorily modelled some at least of the characteristics of the world that interest parapsychologists, just as it may always apply to general psychology.

At any rate, for the time being biographical aspects of particular ostensibly talented individuals are still of importance in psychical research, especially in the realm of the so-called 'physical' phenomena, sometimes called 'psychokinesis'. A person in connection with whom such events are said to occur is called a 'physical medium'. Physical mediumship is now exceedingly rare, at any rate, physical mediumship as described over and over again in the 19th- and earlier 20th-century literature. Opponents of the phenomena are apt to attribute this to the better and more sophisticated methods of detecting fraud, especially by means of the infra-red telescope now at our disposal. Protagonists of the authenticity of such phenomena are more likely to point to the quite outstanding quality both of the experimenters and their testimony when vouching for some of the cases, as well as the often lamentable quality of the attacks on such positive testimony. The recent phenomena alleged to have occurred in connection with Uri Geller and his imitators seem to bear some family resemblance to the classical physical phenomena,<sup>4</sup> and recent attempts by Brookes-Smith following the views of Batchelder may still provide some more directly empirical vindication of the scientists who vouched for the genuineness of these 'physical' events.<sup>5</sup>

Inevitably, if an allegation of fraud is levelled against a particular medium or experimenter, there is a storm of controversy for and against the person so accused. The public at large, and that includes the educated and scientific public, is apt to accept virtually any accusation as a criminal conviction, so strong is the prior subjective certainty of the impossibility of these happenings: those involved are assumed guilty unless proved innocent, and attempted proof of innocence is deemed to be an insult to the good sense of intelligent people.

From the point of view of those who have investigated the phenomena and vouched for their authenticity, there arise complications over and above the fact that their good faith and good sense and powers of observation are drawn into question: it is by no means always the case that a mediumship is thought of, by investigators most closely concerned with it, as an all or none affair. Mediumships are apt to be described as 'mixed'; the medium sometimes helps things

<sup>4</sup> J. Taylor, *Superminds* (1975, London: Macmillan); and C. Panati (ed.), *Scientific observations on the paranormal powers of Uri Geller* (1976, Boston: Houghton Mifflin).

<sup>5</sup> C. Brookes-Smith, 'Data-tape recorded experimental PK phenomena', *JSPR*, 47 (1973), 69-89. In this and later footnotes the abbreviation 'JSPR' is used for *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*.

along in a very normal way indeed, but at times there are believed to be happenings that make such ordinary explanations difficult. Such alleged occasional fraud may, of course, be carefully and deliberately planned. On the other hand, it may be spontaneous, almost ingenuous, and performed when the medium is in a dissociated state; for example, a foot may be used to push a table, a hand may be freed from control, and controlling a writhing entranced medium is not always an easy matter. There is obviously a world of psychological as well as moral difference between the activities of a consciously scheming fraudulent deceiver, complete with accomplices, and a subject in a semi-conscious or even hypnotic condition complying with the expectation of those around him or her; yet this obvious distinction is apt to be overlooked by those not well versed in the literature and practice of parapsychology.

Accusations of fraud may be made almost at once, but they may also be made much later: fresh evidence may come to light, old testimony may be resurrected, ancient quarrels may be revived. Indeed, quite a large part of the subject of psychical research is taken up with attacks, justified or otherwise, on claims made by colleagues in the past. There is about this Penelope-like quality of forever unravelling what has been woven something distasteful and futile, and it is little wonder that modern and younger parapsychologists wish to turn away from such activities and give their attention to fresh experimental and field work. This is certainly understandable, and indeed to be welcomed; on the other hand, as long as experiments and observations are not repeatable under specifiable conditions, apparently successful experimental demonstrations have no more status than other historical events, and the truism applies that those who ignore the past are doomed to repeat it. It is as well, both from the point of view of the future of the subject, as from the intrinsic interest of historical investigation, to examine at least some of the records of such scandals.

## 2. An outline of Rudi Schneider's career as a medium

Among the best documented and attested records of physical mediumship are those of the Austrian medium Rudi Schneider (see figure 1). It is impossible within the compass of this article to give a satisfactory account of a mediumship that was investigated and written about at some length in six countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, France and England). Dozens of investigators and well over a thousand witnesses were involved in the observation of seances in all these countries. Apart from the medium himself, no one person, spectator or researcher, was a constant factor at all investigations. However, a brief and sketchy account of Rudi Schneider's career as a medium is essential to provide a setting for what is the main purpose of this paper: to delineate the anatomy of one particular scandal—the alleged exposure of Rudi Schneider, in *flagrante delictu*, by the psychical researcher Mr. Harry Price (1881–1948).

The bare outlines, then, of Rudi's life as a medium are as follows. He was born in Braunau (the birthplace of Adolf Hitler) in 1909, and he died in 1957, apparently from a stroke. He was the youngest of nine children, of whom only boys survived. Two of his brothers, Karl and Willy, were also physical mediums. It was Willy who first attracted the attention of the scientific world as a consequence of the physical phenomena claimed to occur in his



Figure 1.

Rudi Schneider. Frontispiece of A. von Schrenck-Notzing's posthumously published *Die Phänomene des Mediums Rudi Schneider* (footnote 7).

presence. His trance personality called 'herself' Olga. Willy was widely examined, also in this country;<sup>6</sup> but as is usual in such cases, his supposed powers gradually weakened and faded. One evening, at the Schneider home, when nothing was happening despite all of 'Olga's' promises and efforts, 'she' said that 'she' wanted Rudi as a medium. At this point, Rudi, then eleven years old, entered the seance room in an apparently somnambulistic state and went into a strange physiological state also characteristic of Willy when he became 'Olga', which combined rapid breathing, extreme muscle tension and restlessness, together with a whisper purporting to be the voice of 'Olga'.

From very early on in the mediumship of Rudi, his father, known to all as 'Vater Schneider', kept a regular record of seances which is still in existence and in my possession. Vater Schneider was a typesetter, and clearly an orderly and intelligent man. His records, contained in two thick notebooks, are impressive and systematic accounts of what was experienced when, where and in whose presence; sitters were expected to read and usually sign the seance accounts afterwards. I shall refer to these records as 'Schneider Journals'. It is often possible to compare these Journals with the description

<sup>6</sup> E. J. Dingwall, 'Physical phenomena recently observed with the medium Willy Schneider at Munich', *JASPR*, 16 (1922), 687-698. In this and later footnotes the abbreviation 'JASPR' is used for *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*.

given independently by visitors or researchers, for example, the accounts published by Dr. A. von Schrenck-Notzing<sup>7</sup> or by M. René Sudre.<sup>8</sup> Almost invariably when a comparison is made, there is substantial agreement between the Schneider record and the eye-witness account, although in some cases there are minor discrepancies. As will be seen, from time to time the Journals could be successfully invoked to remind investigators who subsequently denied having witnessed anything of paranormal interest that their later views were at variance with those recorded at the time.

Rudi was investigated over a number of years and under increasingly sophisticated control conditions by Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing in Munich at the latter's purpose-built private laboratory. He was subjected to three investigations in London by Harry Price at the National Laboratory for Psychical Research.<sup>9, 10</sup> The Rev. Dr. W. F. Prince conducted a series of experiments in Stuttgart in the home of Studienrat Dr. Lambert.<sup>11</sup> Rudi was investigated at length by Dr. Eugène Osty and his son Marcel at the Institut Métapsychique in Paris;<sup>12</sup> Lords Charles Hope and Rayleigh conducted a series of systematic experiments under the auspices of the Society for Psychical Research in London.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Theodore Besterman and Mr. Oliver Gatty conducted another (negative) series in London.<sup>14</sup> Experiments were performed in Prague by Professor O. Fischer and Dr. Karel Kuchynka,<sup>15</sup> and finally a major series of experiments was performed by Professor G. Schwaiger in Vienna.<sup>16</sup> This list is not exhaustive, but it includes the most important. Mention should perhaps also be made of a number of visits to the Schneiders' home and other private houses by Professors Meyer and Przibram,<sup>17</sup> Mr. and Mrs. W. V. Vinton,<sup>18</sup> and Dr. Malcolm Bird of the American Society for Psychical Research.<sup>19</sup>

Of those conducting systematic investigations, only Prince believed that fraud had—or to be more precise, could have and therefore must have—been

<sup>7</sup> A. von Schrenck-Notzing, *Die Phänomene des Mediums Rudi Schneider* (1933, Berlin and Leipzig: de Gruyter).

<sup>8</sup> R. Sudre, 'A seance with Rudi Schneider', *JASPR*, **21** (1927), 295–403.

<sup>9</sup> H. Price, *Rudi Schneider—a scientific examination of his mediumship* (1930, London: Methuen).

<sup>10</sup> H. Price, 'An account of some further sittings with Rudi Schneider', *Bulletin IV of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research*, (6 March 1933), 1–199.

<sup>11</sup> W. F. Prince, 'Experiments with physical mediums in Europe', *Bulletin VII of the Boston Society for Psychical Research*, (1928), 1–113.

<sup>12</sup> E. and M. Osty, 'Les pouvoirs inconnus de l'esprit sur la matière', *Revue métapsychique* (1931), 1–60, 393–427; (1932), 81–122.

<sup>13</sup> C. Hope and others, 'Report of a series of sittings with Rudi Schneider', *Proc. SPR*, **41** (1933), 255–330. In this and later footnotes the abbreviation 'Proc. SPR' is used for *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*.

<sup>14</sup> T. Besterman and O. Gatty, 'Report of an investigation into the mediumship of Rudi Schneider', *Proc. SPR*, **42** (1934), 251–286.

<sup>15</sup> K. Kuchynka, 'Expériences à Prague avec Rudi Schneider en 1930, 1935 et 1936', *Metapsychica*, **11** (1956), 1–12.

<sup>16</sup> G. A. Schwaiger, unpublished report on sittings with Rudi Schneider, 4 November 1935–30 June 1936, SPR files, S8–10. 'SPR files', followed by a reference number, refers to the archives of the Society for Psychical Research, 1, Adam & Eve Mews, London W8 6UQ.

<sup>17</sup> A. von Schrenck-Notzing (footnote 7), 2–3.

<sup>18</sup> W. J. Vinton, 'The famous Schneider mediumship—a critical study of alleged paranormal events', *Psyche*, **28** (1927), 3–45.

<sup>19</sup> M. Bird, 'The current status of the Schneider mediumships', *JASPR*, **23** (1929), 351–367, 407–423.

committed. Bestermann and Gatty's experiments were negative, in that no phenomena were observed, or at least satisfactorily witnessed. Meyer and Przibram and the Vintons made definite accusations, as did Bird, based on visits to the home of the Schneiders. Harry Price was alone in claiming to have unmasked Rudi by demonstrating, by means of a photograph, that he had, during a crucial episode during a seance, freed a hand, thus enabling him to manipulate an object allegedly moved by paranormal agency. Virtually all other investigations resulted in generally quite unambiguous testimony that, in the view of the major experimenters, paranormal physical phenomena had been observed, no fraudulent activity whatsoever had been observed or even attempted, and the medium had accepted without demur or hesitation all control conditions imposed by investigators. This is most impressive in the case of those experiments where the medium was separated from friends and family, in an alien environment such as laboratories and drawing rooms in Paris and London, and, in the hands of scientists of repute in other fields as well as being well-versed in the subject of psychical research, such as the Hope-Rayleigh series in London.

Phenomena systematically reported over a substantial number of Rudi's seances can be divided into four categories: (1) the movement of objects at some distance from the medium; (2) the appearance of a visible substance or matter, frequently in the form of a body or part of a body, a so-called 'pseudopod', or a thin mist, named 'materialisation'; (3) the experience of persons present at a session that they were being touched by an invisible hand usually on the head; and (4) the levitation of the entire body of the medium without visible means of support. In addition, there were frequent reports from participants of experiences of extreme localised cold, such as might be felt at the mouth of a flask of liquid air. Interestingly enough, reports of being touched by an unseen hand were the least frequently reported phenomena.

Initially, levitations of the medium's whole body were reported at virtually every seance, and these were described and reasonably well attested in Schrenck-Notzing's laboratory in Munich. However, this phenomenon was not observed in the French and English experiments, and was the first type of occurrence to disappear altogether. 'Materialisations', at first as frequently reported as movements of objects, became gradually less intensive and less frequent. The reported movement of objects, however, persisted to the end of the mediumship (though in a much attenuated state), as did the 'cold air' manifestation. It is certainly the case that the alleged phenomena were far more spectacular, vigorous and abundant in the early days of the mediumship: bells and a cardboard figure named 'August' would sail through the air, a broken-down musical box would play, a typewriter would type by itself, invisible hands would trim a bonnet, a boot would be torn off a foot with some violence, windows would be shattered, and a 'hand' visible or otherwise might be described as playing tug-of-war with an object such as a wastepaper basket, or a handkerchief, which might be torn in half by the struggle.

'Olga's' repertoire was doubtless somewhat limited by the imagination of experimenters. Eventually, as is usual, the phenomena weakened and lessened, and negative sessions were more and more frequent, participants at sessions would wait for hours for a small, fine handkerchief to be lifted off a table for a short period.

It is at this unpromising point in the mediumship that there occurred what might have been and may still, after all, prove to be, a turning-point in the scientific investigation of physical mediumship. Dr. Eugène Osty employed at the *Institut Métapsychique* in Paris, as part of an anti-fraud control system, an infra-red network surrounding the handkerchief to be levitated. Such a device, entirely novel in the early 1930s, had just been installed as a burglar alarm to guard some priceless jewels on exhibition at Burlington House. If any solid object such as an arm or a reaching rod were to approach the handkerchief, it had to cross the infra-red beams, triggering off a system of alarm bells and/or photographic apparatus. To cut a long story short, the alarm system was indeed set in motion, but by no visible agency. Photographs revealed that the beam had been interrupted—but by nothing on record. At first it was supposed that the tripping-off of the alarm system was due to instrumental failure, but eventually it was found that such interruptions, or rather partial interruptions or occultations of the radiation, coincided with ‘Olga’s’ declared intention to move the handkerchief.

‘Olga’, who had at first complained bitterly that the flash (set off by the alarm system) had disturbed and upset ‘her’ and prevented ‘her’ from picking up the handkerchief, was pacified and persuaded by Dr. Osty that ‘her’ ability to ‘go into the ray’ was a considerable achievement. After this, experimenters concentrated more and more on getting ‘Olga’ to affect the infra-red beam, and this was registered by means of galvanometric apparatus and automatically recorded.

The interference with, or absorption or occultation of, the beam was never complete as it would have been if a solid object had been interposed: usually only something of the order of 15% of the beam was absorbed. Observers in Paris and London noted independently that at times the beam oscillated at a period of twice that of the medium’s (abnormally fast) respiratory cycle. Superimposed on this oscillation would be marked deflections of the galvanometer, coinciding with ‘Olga’s’ announcement that ‘she would go into the beam’ or that ‘she’ would ‘try and lift up the handkerchief’, located on the other side. Infra-red beam observations of this type were made independently in Paris, London, and finally in Vienna. No satisfactory ‘normal’ explanation of the results has been suggested to date.

### 3. Early accusations of fraud

It is the aim of this paper to subject to a detailed examination the alleged exposure of the medium Rudi Schneider by Harry Price on 28 April 1932, and the events related to it. This will be preceded by a rather briefer examination of such claims made by certain investigators prior to the Price accusation.

The first of the serious attacks on Rudi’s mediumship came from two Professors at the University of Vienna, Meyer and Przibram. Meyer was Director at the Vienna Radium Institute, and Przibram his chief assistant. Both attended a few seances, mainly in the home of a Major Barauski. In February 1924 various newspapers published accounts that Rudi had been unmasked by Meyer and Przibram.

What had happened was that one Sunday, after a sitting with Rudi, Meyer and Przibram gave a party to which some forty guests were invited. A marvellous new medium was introduced who produced a number of feats, including

total levitation of the medium's body to the entire satisfaction of the spectators, who were apparently persuaded that a new star had risen on the firmament of mediumship. When Meyer subsequently introduced the new 'medium' as none other than his colleague Przibram, and informed the audience that the entire gamut of phenomena they had so enthusiastically applauded had been performed by means of trickery, the learned world breathed a collective sigh of relief: there was, evidently, nothing in the Schneider mediumship that could not be duplicated by an academic gentleman endowed with sufficient ingenuity and gymnastic agility.

Przibram made two important claims: namely, that he was able to free one hand for manipulating objects in such a manner as to give the audience the impression that they were floating about; and that he was able to support himself on one leg whilst raising the other horizontally in the air (after slipping one foot out of the tie that bound the luminous piece of cardboard to the feet), thus imitating the feat of 'floating' in the air in the dark. Both tricks, of course, required complete complicity of the controller, that is, the person in charge of seeing that the hands were firmly held whilst objects were moving about, and of checking that both feet and indeed the rest of his anatomy were clear of the ground during 'levitation'. During these seances both legs of the medium were marked by luminous pins and his feet were tied, the knot being secured with a luminous pin. In order to give the illusion of floating, not only would Rudi need a hand in order to remove the pin securing the knot and to untie one of his feet, so as to use it for standing on; he would also have to transfer one row of pins from the standing to the floating leg and to repin them after the performance. He would then have to re-transfix the knot with the luminous pin.

Protests, not unnaturally, came from persons who had themselves controlled Rudi. It was all very well for Meyer and Przibram to claim that they had found a 'natural explanation': they had merely *simulated* the phenomena under conditions that were not in the least comparable. The most comprehensive counter-claim came from Schrenck-Notzing, who obtained signed statements from Meyer and Przibram which he proceeded to examine in detail.<sup>20</sup> In this the professors state that they attended one seance on 8 December 1923, which had enabled them to exclude certain explanations such as mass hypnosis and the introduction of special apparatus for lifting up the medium. They claimed that at the next seance, dated 26 January 1924, the medium freed a hand from control—the right hand, that is the one nearest to the objects to be moved—and slipped it back into the controller's hand before the end of the sitting. As regards 'levitation', they asserted that—mass hallucination and an accomplice having been excluded—only one interpretation remained, namely that the medium freed one leg from its tie, stepped on the chair with one leg and balanced himself stretching one leg forward whilst bending backward the upper part of his body. This, they said, would also account for the 'fact' (not actually correct) that the medium always landed precisely on the chair after his supposedly paranormal aerial excursions. Przibram wrote that Meyer 'had noticed by feel that the medium had got the right hand free—after re-insertion the hand was noticeably cooler'.

<sup>20</sup> A. von Schrenck-Notzing (footnote 1), 2–3.

Schrenck-Notzing replied to the attacks of Meyer and Przibram at considerable length and in great detail, so much so that the two issued a press statement to the effect that they had not exactly 'unmasked' Rudi, but merely found ways of producing his phenomena in an entirely natural manner. Thus they satisfied themselves that this was the way in which the phenomena must have been brought about.

There was, from the point of view of Meyer and Przibram, one very awkward fact: the seance of 26 January 1924 is recorded in Vater Schneider's Journal, and there, for all to see was Meyer's signature after the account of the events of the seance: 'Die Kontrolle war einwandfrei' ('The control was perfect', literally 'free from objections'), signed 'Professor Dr. Stefan Meyer' (see figure 2). Why did Meyer go out of his way to testify to the excellence of the control conditions if he (and especially Przibram) considered them so poor as to be useless, and if he had actually observed fraudulent manipulations?

The full story, like all accounts of events of this sort, is extremely involved, but these are the bare outlines. Meyer and Przibram had examined the phenomena; Meyer had himself controlled the medium and vouched for the control. They had subsequently simulated the phenomena, or some of them, and accused the medium of fraud. They had, on being confronted with additional testimony and Meyer's own signature, withdrawn the accusation but retained the assertion that they had 'explained' the phenomena. They left unanswered the question how, without the controller's full complicity (that is, on one occasion at least that of Meyer), the phenomena could be explained.

Schrenck-Notzing formed his own group of medical and scientific colleagues largely from the University of Munich, and subjected Rudi to a long series of tests during which the majority of these became entirely satisfied that the phenomena claimed were genuine.<sup>21</sup> Rudi meanwhile continued to give sittings at home, at numerous private houses nearby, in Vienna, Munich, Prague and Zürich. The entry in the Schneider Journal for the seance of 20 June 1925 in Zürich may perhaps be of some interest because of the signature of C. G. Jung (see figure 3).

The next heavily publicised attack on Rudi came from a Mr. Warren J. Vinton.<sup>22</sup> Again, a full account of this set of events would be exceedingly long and, in view of the poor quality of this report dealing extensively with his and his wife's 'feelings' about events and persons, and generalities about the seances rather than precise accounts, it does not seem to me worth while to go into this at length. Had Vinton testified in favour of the phenomena it seems quite plain that no one would have taken seriously his tissue of sentiments, suppositions and generalities. However, one particular claim of his is of interest, in that it constitutes what has subsequently been accepted as eye-witness testimony of fraud, for instance, by T. R. Tietze.<sup>23</sup> Vinton said that during one sitting, that of 9 August 1926, he saw a large figure crouched in the cabinet. He apparently related this to Vater Schneider the next morning (why he did not do so at once is not explained), and Vater Schneider

<sup>21</sup> A. von Schrenck-Notzing (footnote 7). Schrenck-Notzing died in 1929, and his papers concerning Rudi Schneider were edited posthumously by Dr. Gerda Walther.

<sup>22</sup> W. J. Vinton (footnote 18).

<sup>23</sup> T. R. Tietze, 'Ursa Major: an impressionistic appreciation of Walter Franklin Prince', *JASPR*, 70 (1976), 1-35.



*Sitzung in Wien* *hugo*  
*in der Wohnung des Herrn Karanitsky*  
*am 26. Januar 1924.*

*Otto Wagner*  
*Karlmann Bär*  
*Prof. Dr. Stefan Meyer*  
*W. H. H. Muntendorf*  
*Theresa de Faur*  
*Tranac Gyn. Beck-Rykowski*  
*W. H. H. Muntendorf*  
*Sitzung ohne Kabinett*  
*Die Kontrolle konnte genau*  
*kontrolliert werden die absolute*  
*Realität des Levitations Vor-*  
*ganges wird hierdurch bestätigt*  
*26. I. 1924*  
*Die Kontrolle war einwandfrei*  
*Prof. Dr. Stefan Meyer*  
*Karanitsky*  
*W. H. H. Muntendorf*  
*Theresa de Faur*  
*W. H. H. Muntendorf*

Figure 2.

Page from the Schneider Journals, showing signature 'Prof. Dr. Stefan Meyer' before the sitting 26 January 1924 (top left, 3rd line of signatures), and his comment and signature after the sitting (5th and 6th line from below): 'Die Kontrolle war einwandfrei Prof. Dr. Stefan Meyer'.



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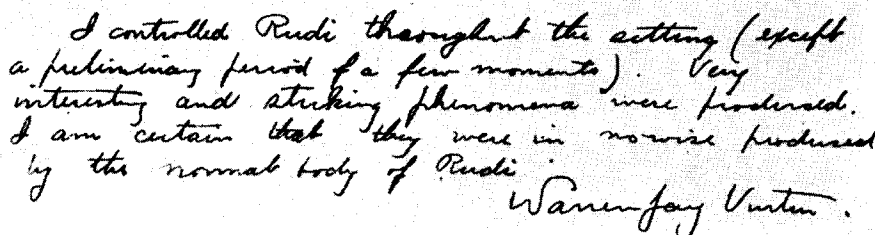
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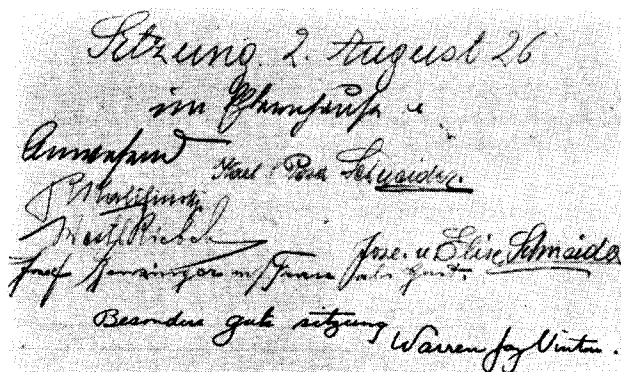
handwriting, in English (see figure 4): 'I controlled Rudi throughout the sitting except a preliminary period of a few moments. Very interesting and striking phenomena were produced. I am certain that they were in no wise produced by the normal body of Rudi'. The next sitting is 2 August 1926, Dr. and Mrs. Dingwall seem to have left, and there is a comment in Mr. Vinton's handwriting (in German): 'particularly good sitting, Warren Jay Vinton' (see figure 5).



I controlled Rudi throughout the sitting (except a preliminary period of a few moments). Very interesting and striking phenomena were produced. I am certain that they were in no wise produced by the normal body of Rudi. Warren Jay Vinton.

Figure 4.

Detail from 196th sitting, 30 July 1926; comment by Warren Jay Vinton.



Sitzung 2. August 26  
im Ghurfürst.  
Ammonst Karl Rosa Schneider.  
J. W. Vinton.  
Josef u. Elise Schneider.  
Josef Schneider u. Maria Schneider.  
Besonders gute Sitzung Warren Jay Vinton.

Figure 5.

Detail from 197th sitting, 2 August 1926, comment by Vinton:  
'Besonders gute Sitzung'.

The next entry is peculiar. It is dated 9 August 1926, and in addition to Vinton and Schneider circle members there were three Americans, a Mr. and Mrs. Cannon from New York and a Mr. Gubisch from Meriden, Connecticut. There is a testimony concerning the control: 'Controlled the first and second periods of the seance—perfect conditions, Mr. W. J. Vinton', in the latter's handwriting, followed by testimony concerning the third period by Mrs. Wm. M. Cannon. And sandwiched in between the general signatures and Mrs. Vinton's testimony, there is in Vinton's handwriting: 'see note by me written after the sitting of August 19th, 1926, Warren Jay Vinton'. Under Mrs. Cannon's testimony are the words 'also seen' in Vinton's handwriting (see figure 6).

198th sitting, 9 August 1926

Mrs. M. M. Cannon New York City

Walter J. Vinton

Mrs. W. S. Vinton

Frank Schuch

Maudie L. Lamm

Pete Schneider

Carl Schneider

See note by me written after sitting of Aug 19, 1926

Controlled the first and second periods in the sances - perfect conditions

Walter J. Vinton

She also remarks I had absolute control of both hands & feet. Her hands and feet were controlled at all times.

Walter J. Vinton

also see [n?]

Figure 6.

Report of 198th sitting, 9 August 1926, showing signatures of those present, including the Cannons and Vintons. The note by Vinton in the middle, 'See note written by me after sitting of August 19, 1926', clearly was not inserted at the time but 10 days later. At bottom of page in Vinton's writing 'also see [n?]', crossed out.

Why did not Mr. Vinton write his observations there and then on 9 August? Why did he wait until right at the end of the sittings? Obviously he inserted these comments afterwards, on 19 August, when he had the book in his hands at his leisure for the first time. The note that is to be found after the sitting of 19 August reads: 'I was told to go in cabinet and pick up tambourine. While doing so I felt a large crouched form in corner of cabinet behind medium. I reported this to Vater Schneider next morning who explained that it was collected teleplasm' (see figure 7). Now this is surely very odd. Why wait till next morning? Why ask Vater Schneider? Why not enter this occurrence right away? No one other than Mr. Vinton seems to have recollected the incident. Why wait a full ten days before reporting on this presumably significant observation? And, most important, why did he not try to sit in the cabinet again?

One can only speculate why Mr. Vinton waited for so long before writing down his comments. Would the other American participants, the Cannons, perhaps have challenged his entries (which were in English) and made him test the allegations for which he was plainly preparing the ground, by sitting, or making him sit again, in the cabinet? Or was the observation an afterthought, some secondary elaboration of what 'must' have happened?

Note to sitting of Aug 9 1926.  
 I was told to go in cabinet and pick up tantarum  
 while doing so I felt a large crouched  
 form in corner of cabinet behind medium. I  
 reported this to Vater Schneider next morning  
 who explained it was collated teleplasm.

Figure 7.

Detail from 201st sitting, 19 August 1925, postscript by Vinton, allegedly referring back to sitting 10 days previously.

I want to express my thanks to the whole  
 Schneider family for their invairable  
 kindness, courtesy, and friendliness  
 during a stay of nearly three weeks  
 in Braunau.

August 19, 1926.

Warren Jay Vinton.

WARREN JAY VINTON  
 16A JOHN STREET  
 ADELPHI  
 LONDON  
 ENGLAND

Figure 8.

Final remark by Vinton, 19 August 1926, in Schneider Journals, at end of 201st sitting.

Mr. Vinton ended his entry in the Journals: 'I want to express my thanks to the whole Schneider family for their invairable [*sic*] kindness, courtesy and friendliness during a stay of nearly three weeks in Braunau, Warren Jay Vinton, 16A, John Street, Adelphi, London, England, August 1926' (see figure 8). It is perhaps not surprising that, when his article appeared, those whose hospitality he had enjoyed in Austria and Germany and whom he had assured of his conviction of the paranormality of the Schneider boys' mediumship, were somewhat displeased.

The Vinton accusations, if carefully examined, amount to very little. His 'feelings' that the whole thing was mere horseplay, his 'feelings' that there was a crafty sly look in Vater Schneider's eye, his 'feeling' of dislike for Major Kalifius or of contempt for Mutter Schneider; none of these amount to anything, particularly since he also allegedly had 'feelings' of awe, fear, bewildered astonishment and so forth. His actual observations, or alleged observations, of a figure crouching in the cabinet is highly dubious and, even if factual, ambiguous. It was unwitnessed, reported far too late, and so far as I have been able to ascertain, no one had ever heard of Vinton before, or for that matter since, as a researcher.

What remains are his assertions about how an accomplice could have got into the cabinet and the categorical statement that, whatever produced the phenomena, it was not the natural body of Rudi. Professors Meyer and Przibram, it will be remembered, had satisfied themselves that they had excluded the possibility of accomplices and that the phenomena *must* have been produced by what Vinton called 'the natural body of Rudi'. Now if Meyer, Przibram and Vinton were all of them right in believing the phenomena to have been wholly fraudulent, then the phenomena were produced in entirely different ways (excepting levitation of the medium's body which was not observed by Vinton): by normal manipulation on Rudi's part for the Viennese professors, and by accomplices for the young Americans.

Whereas Schrenck-Notzing had had a relatively easy task in demonstrating that Rudi could not have manipulated the objects flying about the room under the conditions imposed at his Munich laboratory, he had a far harder task trying to prove that the seances laid on at Braunau were not a collective Schneider family effort. In fact, to disarm this attack Schrenck had to conduct seances in his own laboratory whilst excluding anyone who could reasonably be thought of as an accomplice of the medium. And since he was successful in this, he himself inevitably fell under suspicion of being in the plot.

The next two attacks on the Schneider mediumship came from two rather more expert sources, but they are in point of fact nearly equally vulnerable when examined in some detail. The Rev. Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, an American psychical researcher of considerable importance and prominence, wrote a long and condemnatory report of his sittings with Rudi Schneider, most of which were conducted in the home of Studienrat Dr. R. Lambert.<sup>25</sup> So far as I can see, there is not one shred of evidence that suggests that Dr. Prince actually detected any fraudulent procedure during any one of his 13 seances: there is, however, a fair amount of presupposition and inference. In a recent article Mr. T. R. Tietze takes me to task for dismissing the Prince investigations of Rudi Schneider, but his strictures on my views seem to me so inapposite that I can see no reason for changing my attitude towards Prince and his sittings. Indeed, quite the reverse applies: Mr. Tietze unwittingly supplies good additional reasons why Dr. Prince's opinions as regards the Schneider phenomena should be approached with reserve.<sup>26</sup>

Prince, despite the fact that he ran and organised the seances, found no direct evidence of fraud. His main suspicion was that somehow or another Rudi used his mouth to produce the phenomena, either by blowing at the cabinet curtains, or by extracting from some hiding place on his person a secreted reaching rod and conveying this to his mouth, possibly with Vater Schneider's help. Yet, when on one occasion a sitter cried out: 'Dr. Prince, Dr. Prince, his [Rudi's] face is in your hands', Prince complained bitterly that the sitter was distracting his attention from the curtain movements!<sup>27</sup>

The nearest that Dr. Prince came to an actual claim that something suspicious was actually observed was a rather unsatisfactory story that a person 'X', whose identity he refuses to disclose, wrote to Prince that he saw a small luminous narrow oval shape surrounding a black disc hovering about by

<sup>25</sup> W. F. Prince (footnote 11).

<sup>26</sup> A. Gregory, 'Rejoinder to T. R. Tietze', *JASPR* (in the press : 1977).

<sup>27</sup> W. F. Prince (footnote 11), 48.

Rudi's head, and then withdraw through the keyhole. Prince thought this could have happened 'if a small oval were cut from thin cloth with a rubber coating, luminous paint were applied and, a hole being cut out of the centre, it were firmly fastened around the end of a slender reaching rod, we should have the exact appearance drawn and described. . . .'<sup>28</sup> Vater Schneider had been told not to attend this seance, and his whereabouts were therefore, it seems, unchecked and unknown: the maid had, apparently, gone to bed.

The innuendo that Vater Schneider was, in a strange house, attempting to pass a reaching rod to his son through the keyhole, was never in any way tested or even duplicated for feasibility. Such anonymous testimony, even if it did amount to anything, would hardly be acceptable as incriminating evidence in any other context. Why the secrecy about 'X'? Perhaps 'X' was not all that certain that he had seen anything at all, or else that he had seen exactly what Prince described. It is easy to understand why a professional person of some repute (if 'X' was such) should have refused to allow himself to be quoted when testifying in favour of the authenticity of phenomena; but why should he refuse to disclose his name if he had evidence suggesting trickery? In any case, even if Prince had come to the conclusion that Rudi's phenomena were genuine, psychical researchers might well have declined to give too much weight to his views since he was extremely deaf, and far from fit during much of the investigation. He was moreover so prejudiced against physical phenomena that even an admirer as devoted as Mr. Tietze admits that Prince would hardly have seen any genuine phenomena if there had been any.<sup>29</sup>

The same does not apply to Dr. Malcolm Bird, another American investigator, who also threw doubt on the genuineness of Rudi's mediumship.<sup>30</sup> Bird's paper is written in a manner that inspires somewhat more confidence than the sensationalistic brashness of Mr. Vinton or the tetchy irritability of Dr. Prince. In my view there cannot be any doubt that, had he been convinced of the authenticity of the phenomena, he would not have lacked the courage to say so. He did not disbelieve in principle in the 'physical phenomena': in fact, he was a supporter of the American medium 'Margery', who was at that time dividing the American Society for Psychical Research into two embittered camps. However, Bird only had a single sitting in Braunau, on 11 October 1927, and he refused to stay on any longer to satisfy himself. His suggestion was that while he deliberately allowed his attention to be deflected, someone slipped into the room at 11 p.m. who then worked matters as from the 'cabinet'. This hypothetical accomplice could have been let out again by Major Kalifius, one of the principal sitters, under pretext of letting in Franz Schneider, one of the brothers. On the other hand, Bird himself held the key and opened and locked the door. Why did he part with it? Dr. Bird wrote that all invitations to him to inspect the cabinet ceased during the time when he considered an accomplice could have slipped in. But there is no suggestion anywhere that anyone stopped him: merely that people ceased asking him. And there could have been no possible damage to the medium if Bird had looked into the cabinet during the interval. Why did he—a most

<sup>28</sup> W. F. Prince (footnote 11), 34.

<sup>29</sup> T. R. Tietze (footnote 20), 17.

<sup>30</sup> M. Bird (footnote 19).

experienced and knowledgeable investigator—fail to take this elementary precaution?

If the Schneider Journal is consulted, it is found that there is one discrepancy between it and Bird's report: according to Schneider, feeble phenomena began at 11.20, but Bird's account leads one to suppose that phenomena began at 11.00. Had the Schneiders wished to skate over the fact that an accomplice was smuggled in at 11.00, one would have expected them to err on the side of giving too early rather than too late a time, and perhaps to insist that 'weak' phenomena occurred during the first part of the sitting. Instead, both Schneider Journal and Bird's report insist that the first part was totally blank. Bird signed the book before, but not after, the account, so that, had the Schneiders wished to blur the issue, this would have been very easy.

Bird, then, based his confident assertion of large-scale conspiracy on one single seance during which he admits he took no precautions worthy of the name, or checked up on a single one of his suspicions. He refused to remain in Braunau to satisfy himself despite the fact that he was virtually begged to stay. He may well, as he says, have been busy. In that case, it would seem that a tentative note, rather than a categorical and lengthy accusation, would have been appropriate.

It may perhaps be seen from the above examples that, whatever the truth about the genuineness of the 'physical phenomena', the standards of evidence in hostile reports are, at times, not of the highest.

#### 4. Harry Price and the London background of his first invitation to Rudi Schneider

On 12 February 1929 Schrenck-Notzing died suddenly and unexpectedly of an attack of appendicitis, and there was no-one in Germany to carry on his work. Schrenck possessed not only a passionate interest in psychical research, limitless patience and industry in carrying out investigations and an adequate toughness of fibre to conduct outspoken campaigns against frequent vitriolic attacks; he also had the financial means to devote himself to his chosen subject. His death marks a fundamental turning-point in the career of Rudi Schneider, who was almost immediately plunged into the whirlpool of international psychical research.

Harry Price wrote that he 'found himself' in Munich in March 1929.<sup>31</sup> In a later book he admitted that, as soon as he heard of Schrenck's death, he made a dash to Munich in order to secure Rudi's services for his venture, the National Laboratory of Psychical Research in London.<sup>32</sup> Price signed up Rudi for six seances in London, from 11 to 22 April 1929. Rudi duly arrived in England, gave the seances, and results were sufficiently impressive for Price to invite him to London for a more prolonged series of sittings for the autumn of 1929 and early 1930.

Price had had sittings with Rudi earlier in Braunau. After Schrenck's death he 'took over' Rudi and turned him into a newspaper celebrity, at any rate in England. In his book *Rudi Schneider* (1930) Price wrote that he had

<sup>31</sup> H. Price (footnote 9), 3.

<sup>32</sup> H. Price, *Fifty Years of Psychical Research* (1939, London: Longmans), 102.



two aims in inviting Rudi to London: to examine him under the most stringent conditions of control and thus to 'settle, once and for all' the present status of the mediumship; and to 'inform the press'. Concerning this latter goal, Price said:

That we have succeeded beyond our most sanguine hopes is proved by the fact that there is not a man, woman or child in Great Britain who has not read about Rudi, his phenomena and the conditions controlling the experiments. The British public has learnt more about scientific psychical research in the last few months than it did in the previous fifty years. That we have rescued the science from the mire of charlatanry in which it has been wallowing for generations is proved by the fact that the public is *at last* beginning to realise the difference between modern organised scientific psychical research and 'spiritualism'.<sup>33</sup>

It is quite impossible to understand Rudi's subsequent career and to attempt any valid estimate of his phenomena without forming some picture of the international background of psychical research and of the personality of Harry Price in particular. Until Schrenck's death Rudi had been, from the point of view of English, French and American psychical researchers, a rather questionable and not particularly interesting Austrian medium. Vinton's, Prince's and Bird's attacks were designed, if not to damn Rudi, at any rate to place by his name a large question mark. Schrenck's papers on Rudi were not published until years after his death, in 1933. When Harry Price claimed that Rudi was indebted to him for what fame he won outside Austria and Germany, he was in a sense right. If Price had not, immediately upon hearing the news of Schrenck's decease, rushed to Munich and invited Rudi to London, the medium would probably never have been heard of again outside his intimate circle.

Price's establishment, the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, published a journal called *The British journal of psychical research*. Its January/February 1929 number contains an article by him entitled 'A plea for a better understanding'.<sup>34</sup> In it he analysed the mutual inter-relationships of the main psychical research institutions and of the principal personalities in the field as they existed early in 1929. The paper presents a devastating and shrewdly observed sociogram of the mutual detestation in which the different organisations and personalities at the time held one another. It also bears involuntary but eloquent testimony to his own touchiness, quarrelsomeness and need to dominate the scene. His remedy for the ills of psychical research was wholesale amalgamation of societies and organisations. It is not easy to see how he imagined this would have improved the hideously bad inter-personal relations that he described: would these not have been, if anything, exacerbated if all these old rivals and enemies, instead of running their own show, had been fighting for control of one and the same set-up? Would not all these bitter antagonists have fought one another to the last breath for the inevitably smaller numbers of controlling appointments in the new larger units?

Harry Price's recommendation that all psychical research organisations should merge was not a mere pious sentiment. He himself made active and

<sup>33</sup> H. Price (footnote 9), vii.

<sup>34</sup> H. Price, 'A plea for a better understanding—a seasonable effort to repair some shattered friendships', *British journal of psychical research*, 2 (1929), 129–140.

determined efforts to merge his National Laboratory for Psychical Research with numerous other organisations. A very large body of correspondence on this subject survives, not only in Harry Price's archives now at the University of London, but also at the *Institut Métapsychique* in Paris and at the London Society for Psychical Research. His negotiations for these mergers were often secret, and his motives for pursuing them not wholly transparent. None of them came to anything despite the fact that on the face of it his offers were generous. It seems that at least some of the recipients of his offers to join forces with them regarded his terms as being in the nature of a Trojan horse—a take-over bid. Price attempted to amalgamate with Osty's organisation in Paris, with the London Society for Psychical Research and (after personal negotiations with Adolf Hitler) with the University of Bonn.<sup>35</sup> Some of these episodes will be described more fully later.

The last words of Price's 'A plea for better understanding' are: 'I have purposely excluded the name of Lord Charles Hope from among the active investigators because I am not aware that he is at loggerheads with anyone—except perhaps a few mediums of doubtful reputation'.<sup>36</sup> Lord Charles Hope and Dr. Eugène Osty were virtually the only researchers of note exempted from Harry Price's universal anathema upon all investigators. Within three years from the date of this paper, Price was engaged in some of the bitterest quarrels of his tempestuous career, in the course of which he did what lay in his power to destroy the reputations of both Hope and Osty. If one were writing a tragedy in the Greek manner called 'Rudi Schneider', most of the material for an omniscient, prophetic (if somewhat ironical) chorus would be contained in Harry Price's 'Seasonable effort to repair some shattered friendships' at Christmastide, 1928.

It is impossible within the compass of this article to give full accounts of the investigations that followed. However, it is important to make it clear that if, in the opinion of the numerous experienced and often eminent researchers who conducted experiments with Rudi Schneider after the death of Schrenck-Notzing, there had not been obtained impressive and interesting evidence in favour of the authenticity of paranormal physical phenomena, the claimed exposures of the medium would hardly have excited much interest. Table 1 provides an outline of the investigations of Rudi Schneider following the death of Schrenck-Notzing in 1929.

It is precisely because of the apparently epoch-making breakthrough accomplished by Osty and repeated by Hope and also incidentally under Price's own aegis, that Price's denunciation had the importance and impact it did have. Moreover, Price was the publicist of psychical research *par excellence* in England in the 1920s and 1930s. To thousands of people to this day psychical research *means* the books of Harry Price. His accounts of

<sup>35</sup> Hitler referred the matter to the *Reichs- und Preussisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung*, the *Innenministerium* and the *Auswärtiges Amt*. It was then passed on to the University of Bonn, on behalf of which Professor Dr. Hans Bender wrote to Price on 20 March 1937 that his offer was in principle acceptable and that the German government would confer upon Price the Red Cross Medal, 1st Class. Nothing ever came of this deal. The correspondence is preserved in the Harry Price Library (see footnote 38 below). Some of it is reprinted in H. Price, *Search for truth* (1942, London: Collins), 113.

<sup>36</sup> H. Price (footnote 34), 140.

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1929	Rudi in London, April. First Series of experiments at National Laboratory of Psychical Research, Harry Price. Electrical control of medium and all sitters. 5 sittings. Phenomena 'brilliant'.
1929-30	London, November to January. Second Series of experiments at National Laboratory of Psychical Research. Electrical control. 21 sittings. Phenomena 'brilliant'.
1930-31	Rudi in Paris, <i>Institut Métapsychique</i> , Eugène Osty. 15 months of experimentation. 90 sittings. Tactual control, infra-red apparatus. Occultation of infra-red rays. Results 'positive'.
1931	Party of four from National Laboratory (H. Price, Miss E. Beenham, Mrs. K. M. Goldney and Miss M. Walker) visit Braunau. 3 sittings. 'Very good phenomena'.
1932	Third Series of experiments at National Laboratory of Psychical Research; series of 27 sittings, February to May. Tactual control, infra-red apparatus. Phenomena 'often good but not so brilliant as in 1929/30'. Contentious seance of 'freed hand', 28 April 1932.
1932	Hope-Rayleigh sittings, Society for Psychical Research, London. 27 sittings. 'Telekinetic phenomena' and partial occultations of infra-red rays.
1933	Price accusation of fraud, 5 March 1933, referring to 28 April 1932.
1933	Paris, <i>Institut Métapsychique</i> , February/March. 17 sittings, negative.
1933	Party of 5 from Society for Psychical Research visit Rudi in Weyer, Austria, September. Usual phenomena under 'non-evidential' conditions.
1933-34	London, October to March, Besterman-Gatty sittings, negative. March, informal sittings, Lord Charles Hope; familiar surroundings and sitters. 'Some phenomena, restricted to curtain movements and slight telekinesis'.
1935-36	November to June. Schwaiger experiments, Vienna, 'positive'.
1937	London International Institute for Psychical Investigation. 6 sittings, 'negative'.

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Table 1.

Outline of investigations of Rudi Schneider after the death of Schrenck-Notzing (based on data and evaluations kindly supplied by Mrs. K. M. Goldney).

paranormal phenomena inspired interest and often conviction where far more academic and detached champions failed lamentably.

Harry Price was a businessman who, in his middle years, devoted a very large portion of his time, energy and money to the pursuit and popularisation of psychical research. The Harry Price Library at Senate House, University of London, is an eloquent testimony to his zeal as a collector of books and documents, as a tireless correspondent on psychic topics, and an expert on the art of conjuring. This library also contains a huge number of newspaper cuttings, all of them collected by Price, regarding the reaction of the press to his own activities in the psychic field.

Price's theoretical position can be gathered from the extracts from his writings already quoted: by and large he championed a belief in the occurrence of all the phenomena, although he was widely regarded as a fearless unmasker of mediums. As regards spiritualism he vacillated between two poles: when he wished for widespread popular support he would court spiritualist opinion, conceding that belief in survival was accepted among the majority of those who occupied themselves with such matters, and hinting that he himself shared this belief; when, on the other hand, he wished to present himself as the champion of a new scientific discipline, he would belabour spiritualism as a

mire of benighted superstition from which he personally had rescued the subject. This dual attitude, which is by no means confined to Price, must also be taken into consideration when assessing anyone's claims in this field. Public and private utterance, unguarded and official comment, are by no means identical, and the would-be enquirer has to decide for himself which he is going to accept, and to what extent.

Harry Price was, without question, passionately interested in psychic phenomena. Whereas the image of himself that he most of all desired—and indeed managed—to project was that of the keen, dispassionate, critical researcher who fearlessly denounced and exposed, a careful perusal of what he actually wrote and published suggests at times an almost uncritical credulity. For example, the same number of the *British journal for psychical research* that contained his 'Plea for a better understanding' also contains an article by himself entitled 'Psychic experiments in the Roman Catacombs'.<sup>37</sup> In this he describes how he introduced into the Roman catacombs an unnamed clairvoyant, who proceeded to give his or her 'visions' of the life of St. Agnes which differed considerably from the traditional Catholic version. It is an interesting enough tale, though it is hard to tell what it could possibly show. Yet Harry Price purports to take this tale perfectly seriously as being clairvoyant vision of the true past—using as confirmation the fact that a picture of an 'old master', supposedly a 16th-century artist, seemed to Price to bear a fair resemblance to the scene as depicted by the clairvoyant. The similarity sounds so vague and the time-lag so long (between St. Agnes's death in the early 4th century and the 'old master' there lies over a millennium of non-history) that one wonders how Price had the nerve to write this article at all, let alone suggest that the 'psychic story [received] substantial confirmation from a 16th century "old master" who may have been conversant with the true account of the girl's martyrdom which he delineates—with the usual artistic license—on the canvas . . .'. One receives the impression of an immense superstructure of careful detail, such as Price's skilful and familiar dealings with Church dignitaries and civil authorities, super-imposed on a very meagre tale indeed; but such was the teller's skill that he managed not only to fascinate his audience but in no wise impaired his reputation for being critical.

One thing emerges with certainty: Harry Price was a superb propagandist, and a tireless worker. There can be no doubt, at least in my mind, that he was genuinely committed to the subject of psychical research and was anxious to establish it as a respectable subject in the universities. Unfortunately (and of this I feel equally certain) he was also determined that he personally should be responsible for this innovation. He saw himself as the great amateur scientist, presenting the world of learning with a new discipline. However, he was not the retiring, eccentric, saintly type of dedicated enthusiast to whom nothing mattered by the impersonal truth: his own part in the drama mattered to him supremely and in the last resort his own part mattered more to him than the subject to which he had given and sacrificed so much: he was willing to bring the edifice crashing down rather than to take second place in it. From a perusal of hundreds of letters a clear enough picture emerges of a man

<sup>37</sup> H. Price, 'Psychic experiments in the Roman catacombs, a clairvoyant life of St. Agnes', *British journal of psychical research*, 2 (1929), 140–155.

passionately devoted both to psychical research and also to his own self-aggrandisement. Regrettably (like others before and after him) he managed to convince himself that these two devotions were identical and could not conflict; and occasionally the truth, in a very ordinary and uncontroversial sense of that much-debated word, became a casualty in the process.

### 5. Price's First Series of experiments

Rudi was accompanied to London by a Dr. Amereller, a very convenient choice from Price's point of view, since he was an engineer and brought with him Schrenck-Notzing's blue-prints for the electrical control of the medium; actually Amereller had made up the switchboard itself 'to save time' before he got to London. This electrical control was to become one of the major emotional issues in the controversy that exploded over the question of Rudi's mediumship.

As developed by Schrenck, the device, which consisted of low-voltage warning lights, controlled the hands and feet of the medium and controller by four different circuits. Price's innovation was to control the hands and feet of all sitters in the same way, making six separate circuits in all. On Schrenck's system sitters could see a panel of four lights which, if the medium was properly controlled, were all of them alight. If, for example, the controller let go of Rudi's right hand, the corresponding bulb would go out. Price added two additional circuits, one of them for the combined hands of all the sitters, the other for the combined feet of all the sitters. If any sitter broke contact then (if, of course, the device worked properly) the appropriate light would go out.

The principle of an electrical control was something of a controversial issue in England. A good many, if not most, British psychical researchers felt that such a supposed safety measure was an unnecessary complication deflecting attention from the medium and the phenomena, that with sufficient ingenuity such electrical gadgetry could be circumvented like any other device, and that the traditional dual manual control by responsible and experienced persons was more satisfactory. This was quite an issue as between Price on the one hand, and various scientists and senior members of the Society for Psychical Research on the other.

Harry Price's seance protocols are rather similar to Schrenck-Notzing's; but they are, in one respect, decisively inferior. Schrenck circulated his accounts of seances to the sitters for their comments and signatures prior to publication; but Price did not. The drawbacks of this omission will be obvious after a moment's reflection. Much of the force of testimony is lost if sitters are not asked to endorse an account. Even Vater Schneider, who had no scientific pretensions, appreciated the importance of obtaining sitters' signatures and, if possible, testimony. If reports of seances are not circulated among sitters, subsequent disagreements will be virtually impossible to settle since the dissentient will only be speaking from long-term memory. No participant had the opportunity to comment, whether by way of corroboration or disagreement, before Price's accounts were published, often months, in one case a year, later. Consequently, these accounts are little more than Price's own detailed claims and observations.

It could be argued that Harry Price would hardly be likely to publish detailed accounts of sittings, including names of participants, which were totally different from what actually occurred. On the other hand, there could well have arisen—as eventually there did arise—a bitter controversy about *exactly* what happened and when; and this controversy was to bring out the essential weakness of his procedure from an evidential point of view. Looked at in another light, the controversy could, of course, be regarded as having demonstrated just how decisive a strategic advantage failure to circulate reports gave Price: he, and he alone, had the relevant contemporary records.<sup>38</sup>

After the first seance Harry Price approached Sir Richard Gregory, the Editor of *Nature*, and asked him to take part in the Rudi investigation. Sir Richard replied as follows (in HPL):

8th April 1929

Dear Mr. Price,

I am sorry it is impossible for me to be present at the suggested seance with Rudi Schneider on Friday evening next, as I am leaving on Thursday evening until Monday morning. I suggest that you might communicate with Prof. Rankine, Imperial College of Science, South Kensington, Prof. [Julian] Huxley, King's College, Strand, and Lord Rayleigh, Terling Place, Chelmsford, Essex, to see if they would care to attend seances at which, I suppose, evidence will be demonstrated of the reality of ectoplasmic phenomena.

Sincerely yours,

[signed] R. A. Gregory

Price says that these names 'had already occurred to' him: he asked Rayleigh and Rankine, and Huxley had already been notified in the usual way as a member of the National Laboratory for Psychical Research.

The seance at which Lord Rayleigh, Professor of Physics at Imperial College, London, attended was a fiasco: nothing happened, at least until he left. Price says that it was the atmosphere that was bad: the sitters did not know each other and were bad mixers, everyone was stiff and formal, whereas what Rudi needed most of all for the production of good phenomena was an atmosphere of jollity and good fellowship. He quoted Professor Hans Thirring on the subject of the conditions needed by the Schneider brothers:

In all our sittings the strongest telekinetic phenomena occurred amidst a roar of laughter when the sitters were joking or when some rhythmical chorus was sung . . . I believe that the production of the phenomena must necessarily depend on the mutual feelings of good will between medium and sitters. . . . It is obvious that a good many average men would not even be able to fall asleep in their own beds at 10 p.m. if half a dozen university professors were sitting around them waiting in deadly silence for the occurrence of the phenomenon. The far more delicate metapsychical phenomena cannot be produced by the mere will of the medium. Some psychic emotion seems to be necessary in the same way as certain sexual functions are started by emotions and imaginations. In the case of our medium the necessary emotions seemed to be furnished by rhythmical music, by the touch of a woman, or by the

<sup>38</sup> Price left his correspondence, papers, photographs and plates, books and other documents to the Harry Price Library, which is at present kept in the University of London Library at Senate House, University of London. Letters and papers relating to Price's investigation of Rudi Schneider are not kept in any one file, and relevant documents are not organised on any particular principle. I shall refer to documents to be found in the Harry Price Library by 'HPL' in the text and in footnotes.

buoyant spirit of a cheerful circle. Whenever the atmosphere of the circle resembles a lawcourt with the medium as the poor delinquent, or, even worse, when the sitting takes the form of a college examination, no phenomena will occur. . . .<sup>39</sup>

Price quoted this in order to contradict the rumour that spread at once to the effect that it was Lord Rayleigh's presence that had inhibited the phenomena, presumably that in the presence of the eminent scientist trickery had been impossible and that consequently nothing had happened. However, there is no reason to suppose that Lord Rayleigh came away with a particularly unfavourable impression of the medium or the proceedings. In fact, he was to be partly in charge of the most impressive investigation of Rudi ever conducted, and in which positive results were certainly claimed;<sup>40</sup> and his subsequent defence of Rudi against unnamed accusers—in point of fact, Price—was to form a substantial portion of his Presidential Address to the Society for Psychical Research in 1937.<sup>41</sup> However, none of these later happenings were dreamed of in 1929 when Rudi first came to Price in London. Price was Rudi's manager and champion, and he made every effort to interest the scientific world in his protégé.

The seance room was on the 4th floor at the back of the house at 16 Queensberry Place, London, S.W.7, a house now occupied by the College of Psychic Studies. It is entirely clear that the seances were fully and exclusively under the control of Harry Price. The first six sittings Rudi gave in London between 11 and 22 April 1929, Price's 'First Series', terminated to everyone's satisfaction. 'Olga' demonstrated her usual repertoire: curtain movements, playing of the little toy zither, writing on pieces of paper, tying knots into handkerchiefs, knocking over tables, pulling wastepaper baskets about. She also 'showed her hand', or rather people reported seeing formations ranging from a 'hand' to three or four fingers of more or less indefinite formation manipulating objects and vanishing. Moreover, vague 'snowmanlike' masses, so often seen, were also reported; 'a curious mass is visible between the opening of the curtains; it seems to have life; it slowly disappears'. On the occasion when Professor Rankine was 'guest of the evening' sitters 'distinctly [saw] the pseudopod supporting' a wastepaper basket floating about. Sitters saw a shapeless white mass form between the opening of the curtains. It seemed luminous to a certain extent and fairly solid. Price says he distinctly made out a fairly elderly woman's face with the figure of a child wearing either a child's frock or nightdress, about three feet high, remaining for about two minutes.

Mr. Price was in his element. Every opportunity, he says, was given the Press for attending seances, and the newspapers were almost wholly sympathetic and reported the experiments fully, faithfully and seriously. He says that he 'casually mentioned' to Hannen Swaffer that he would give £1000 to anyone who could produce the same effects under identical conditions to the satisfaction of the same independent observers, provided that, if the would-be medium failed, he would pay a like sum to the National Laboratory. 'To my

<sup>39</sup> H. Price (footnote 9), 22.

<sup>40</sup> C. Hope (footnote 13). The series of experiments described in this paper are usually referred to as the Hope-Rayleigh investigation.

<sup>41</sup> Lord Rayleigh, 'The problem of physical phenomena in connection with psychical research', *Proc. SPR*, 45 (1938), 1–18.

amusement', he writes, 'the "challenge" duly appeared in the *Daily Express* the next morning and was published by the evening papers the same day. Sunday papers repeated the offer and one or two "featured" it, devoting the whole front page to the challenge. . . '.

Challenges to magicians to duplicate the feats of mediums are by no means new, and Price, who was an expert conjuror and extremely learned on the subject of the history of magic and legerdemain, was well versed in these episodes. Clive Maskelyne had accepted, and then backed out of, the £1000 challenge of Dennis Bradley to simulate the phenomena of the medium Valiantine. Price says he only received one or two timid enquiries, but when particulars were given nothing further was heard: one bright young man, for example, wanted to bring three of his friends and his own cabinet.

When Rudi had returned to Austria, Price received a letter from the Hon. Secretary of the Occult Committee of the Magic Circle asking for a seance. Price, 'as a friendly gesture', asked them to come to the Laboratory to ascertain if any of them could produce a single phenomenon worthy of the name under the identical conditions imposed upon Rudi. The Committee declined to entertain the offer: 'Even if the phenomena proved to be normal, it is not always simple to copy the specialist; we were challenged on one occasion to duplicate the Zanzigs' performance; comment was needless'.

Price, however, did comment: he said he knew that the Zanzigs' performance took years to perfect and several hours of practice daily, and that he had in his possession all their signalling codes. Since Rudi was known never to practise, or indeed to 'work' at his mediumship in any way outside seances, the Zanzigs were hardly a comparable case. 'All the conjurors' delegate had to do was to sit in a chair, his hands held by two persons and each limb controlled electrically, to make a noise like a steam engine for three hours; and to produce a single of Rudi's phenomena. Can it be that the reason asked Price, 'why the conjurors refused my cordial invitation to demonstrate, was because they knew they could not produce a single effect under the prescribed conditions? I wonder!' (HPL).

It seems to me that Price's challenge to the conjurors was indeed fair: Rudi was known to accept any experimental conditions whatsoever that were imposed upon him. True, once he was in trance 'Olga' might make re-arrangements, as we have already seen; but Rudi as Rudi always complied with whatever he was told to do by the persons in charge of the experiment. Schrenck had already commented upon his exemplary behaviour particularly in this respect, and every subsequent experimenter (with one single exception, oddly enough that of Price himself, which will be discussed fully later on) has agreed that Rudi never made any conditions or objected to any safety precautions. To the best of my knowledge no conjuror has ever accepted the conditions to which Rudi was submitted evening after evening, let alone produced any effects of any kind, whilst thus controlled. The magician who needed three accomplices and possibly his own cabinet probably assessed the situation fairly correctly.

## 6. Price's Second Series of experiments

In the autumn of the same year, 1929, there followed the 'Second Series' of Price's investigations. There were altogether 21 sittings, from October 1929



until January 1930. Price said that it was 'useless' to try and experiment in the summer, although Schrenck had certainly reported positive results in summertime. However, there was a widespread feeling among experienced sitters that the colder seasons were better for seances, and although this is not captured by the records there may well have been qualitative differences between 'good' and 'bad' seances. 'Olga' asserted that the weather made no difference.

The first experimental seance was on 14 November 1929. Those present were Mrs. Mitcheson (sister of the late Professor J. B. S. Haldane), Dr. William Brown, the psychiatrist, Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy at Oxford and later founder and first Director of the Oxford University Department of Experimental Psychology, Miss Elizabeth Williamson, who was assistant at the University of London Observatory, Dr. Norman Jeans, anaesthetist at Salop County Hospital, Shrewsbury, Price himself, Miss Baggallay, Lord Charles Hope and Major Kalifius.

There was a long delay, after which there were some slight phenomena: the zither knocked on the table, a basket was taken out of Miss Baggallay's hand and floated about, and 'cold breezes' were felt. After some time Rudi was possessed (if that is the right word) not by 'Olga' but by 'Dr. Meier' (an entity that occasionally put in an appearance), who asked for pencil and paper. 'Meier' wrote that 'Olga' was unable to come.

The second seance took place four days later, on 18 November 1929. Again, nothing especially impressive seems to have happened. Captain F. McDermott, who acted as second controller, made the observation that he found that the medium's leg muscles contracted and trembled before and during the occurrence of phenomena. Another sitter, the Rev. Digby B. Kittermaster, a school-teacher at Harrow, remarked that it was a pity that Miss Kaye was not controlled, since sceptics might seize on this point. Eventually this criticism was met by placing the assistant behind a curtain, but Price writes that before this she was always in the habit of placing her hands on the shoulders of one of the sitters once phenomena had started.

Mr. Kittermaster, 'unwisely' according to Price, made the same remark to 'the one and only Press representative who was present at the seance'. The only person who could be meant was Mr. Charles Sutton. He had attended several of the earlier sittings of Price's First Series and had apparently been impressed then. However, he changed his mind and it appears that he told Price that 'if he were to see the phenomena a hundred times, under any conditions, he would not admit the genuineness of Rudi'.

Mr. Sutton's paper (the *Daily Mail*) then started a systematic attack on the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. Dr. E. J. Dingwall joined in by writing a letter in which he described the sittings as 'burlesque entertainment' and referred to the general 'howling' at 'Olga's' bidding. Price observed that Dr. Dingwall 'conveniently omitted to mention that he himself certainly did his share of the "howling" when he had the chance', and had joined Price in signing his famous statement that he believed Willy Schneider to be genuine.

Mr. Sutton did not claim to have found any evidence of fraud, nor did he believe that Miss Kaye had produced the phenomena by trickery, nor even that she could have produced them all had she wished: he was merely impressed

with the same experimental flaw as the Rev. Kittermaster.<sup>42</sup> His campaign was evidently directed against Harry Price rather than against Rudi Schneider, and that for reasons which he was unable to print in Price's lifetime: he considered that he had evidence that Price had fraudulently contributed to the phenomena at Borley Rectory, but his editor killed the story, after consulting the newspaper's lawyer, as being too dangerous from a legal point of view.<sup>43</sup>

The third seance was on 21 November. On the previous morning, Price received a letter from Major Hervey de Montmorency, D.S.O., which is certainly of some interest:

34, Clifton Hill,  
St. John's Wood, N.W.8  
21.11.'29

Dear Sir,

My uncle often used to tell me that when he was a young man in Paris about 1840—I believe—the notorious 'Lola Montez' (then 22 years old) was his mistress. I suggest you ask Olga through the medium Rudi Schneider what was my uncle's name what were the circumstances under which my uncle escaped from her when she attempted to kill him. You can take down her reply without letting me know what it is, and when I have narrated my story of my uncle's escapade you can see if it agrees with the medium's account of it.

Yours truly

[signed] Hervey de Montmorency

P.S. I have written out the story and will post it to you at 9 p.m. to-night.

It seems the greatest possible pity that this fascinating matter was not in any way followed up systematically. Apparently 'Olga' was only asked twice about the incident, rather casually, and on both occasions she said she would 'tell the sitters next time' or she would 'go to find out'. Then the matter was dropped. Harry Price, who reprinted Major de Montmorency's letter on page 70 of his book *Rudi Schneider*, refers to the matter again *en passant* on page 216, where he reprints de Montmorency's second letter:

Arthur's  
St. James's Street, S.W.1  
21.11.'29

Dear Mr. Price,

With reference to our conversation on the telephone this morning, my uncle to whom I referred was Mr. Francis Leigh of Rosegarland, Co. Wexford, Ireland. As he was born in 1815, in 1840 he must have been 25 years of age; he was then—or had been—a lieutenant in the 10th Hussars.

In Paris in about 1840, Lola Montez became his mistress and one day in a fit of jealousy she seized a pistol and fired it at my uncle; my uncle, in order to escape, jumped out of the window. As Lola Montez' apartment was in the rez de chaussée, my uncle escaped with a shaking.

Yours sincerely,

[signed] Hervey de Montmorency

Price does not refer to a telephone conversation anywhere, so it is not clear where this came in. Supposing 'Olga' *had* displayed some interesting inside

<sup>42</sup> K. M. Goldney, note concerning statement made by Mr. C. Sutton on 12 June 1948. Personal files of Mrs. K. M. Goldney (in her private possession). These will be referred to below as 'KMG'.

<sup>43</sup> C. Sutton, 'Meditations', in *Inky way annual*, No. 2 (undated, purchased in 1948), 125 (KMG).

information concerning the doings of Lola Montez as described by de Montmorency, this would have been rendered completely valueless by the fact that Price communicated with the Major in addition to the written correspondence. One wonders whether the telephone conversation is the reason why the second letter is reprinted more than 150 pages later than the first. As it is, all we can say is that 'Olga' gave no evidence whatsoever that she knew anything about Lola: indeed, she did not claim to *be* Lola or even to know anything about her since she had to 'go and find out'.

Another instance of the extreme casualness with which experiments were carried out is that of attempts made for an observer to sit in the cabinet during seances. Lord Charles Hope and A. F. C. Pollard, Professor of Optical Engineering (Mechanical) and Instrument Design at Imperial College, sat in the cabinet on several occasions. Another time an attempt was made to get Mrs. Baggallay to slip into the cabinet during one of the pauses: Price and Miss Baggallay were to be controllers. To everyone's surprise 'Olga' asked that Mrs. Baggallay should take her daughter's place as controller, thus frustrating the plan. Mrs. Baggallay had never controlled before.

Why was this not followed up? 'Olga' was, on the face of it, extraordinarily cooperative as regards control conditions, and she had often allowed, even invited, sitters to be in the cabinet while phenomena were in progress. Supposing, for argument's sake, that 'she' wanted to show off her prowess in sensing people's plans; then 'she' could have been complimented on her perspicacity and her permission could then have been asked to allow Mrs. Baggallay or someone else to sit in the cabinet. There seems to me to be something extremely unsatisfactory about the activity of sitting with Rudi night after night, watching the phenomena as if they were a theatrical performance which had to be shown to as many people as possible, and without systematically following up anything. It could perhaps be objected that there was, at that time, some talk about Rudi's retiring as a medium, and therefore it was wiser to show the phenomena to as many people as possible. Price claimed that Rudi would not sit again, except possibly in Paris in April 1930, after the Second Series of seances, 'as he wants to devote himself to his career'. There is some evidence from letters that Vater Schneider was concerned that Rudi was losing time and money during his trips which should have been devoted to establishing himself in his trade as a motor mechanic.

Press coverage continued. Mr. Will Goldston, Founder and President of the Magicians' Club, 'the premier British conjuring society', attended a seance, was thoroughly satisfied with what he found, and duly wrote up his experiences for the *Sunday Graphic* of 22 December 1929, under the title 'A night with the ghosts':

Because I am an illusionist and a conjuror I made a special point of being the first sitter to arrive for the seance. . . . That gave me time to have a good look at the seance room. When I said 'a good look' I mean a conjuror's inspection which is severe and detailed. No objection was made against my examining the room and its fittings, so I tapped the walls, looked carefully at the floor for trapdoors and felt every inch of the two curtains which hung in the corner of the room forming the cabinet. . . . But more than that, I tested the electrical control . . . ingenious system . . . I could find no fault in this system of control or in the way it works.

I examined also the cabinet as well as the stool and the waste-paper basket

which was placed in front of the cabinet. The four ribbons attached to the curtains were just ordinary luminous ribbons . . . I kept my eyes wide open and my sense alert . . . I understand German and followed everything said.

It was suggested that an interval of 10 minutes should take place to allow the control to gather force and we adjourned to the next room for a smoke, Rudi having come out of his trance. I was the last to leave the room and I was the first to return to it. Rudi was the third person to walk from the room. He seemed tired.

We saw the stool on which stood the basket illuminated by phosphorous paint move towards us. It moved in a peculiar way and then suddenly toppled over. Curtains flew apart. We felt a fearful icy draught blowing. It was uncanny. I watched keenly for signs of trickery, but saw none. Raps. One of the students (Mr. Oliver Gatty) suggested nine . . . I am convinced that what I saw was not trickery. No group of my fellow magicians could have produced those effects under those conditions.

However successful the sittings were, 'Olga' continued to demand solo singing performances from those present. On one memorable occasion when she was presumably feeling peculiarly tyrannical, she insisted that each person present must sing 'absolutely solo'. Price started off with 'Oh Katharina!'; Mrs. Eileen J. Garrett then had difficulty in thinking of a song but rendered three lines of 'Rule Britannia'; Mrs. Baggallay sang 'In Lauterbach hab' ich mein Strumpf verloren'; which 'Olga' liked; Miss Baggallay sang 'Way down upon the Swanee River'; Lord Charles Hope sang 'Au clair de la lune'; and Miss Kaye did her best with 'O Tannenbaum'. There followed, we are assured, plenty of phenomena.

At the 19th and 20th seances, on 14 and 16 January respectively, Professor Nils Hofsten, who held the Chair of Comparative Anatomy in the University of Uppsala, was present. Hofsten tried afterwards to simulate certain of the curtain movements but failed. Apparently the seance was a great success. The professor got away with a few lines of the Swedish National anthem. He declared himself deeply impressed and displayed his emotions of shock and surprise rather freely. On 22 January he wrote to Price from Uppsala, saying how impressed he was with the phenomena and asking to be allowed to take part in further seances should they be held. He added that he had had an interesting talk with Rudi and had formed a 'favourable impression of him' (HPL).

In Price's First and Second Series altogether 110 persons were present during sittings. Of these 21 acted as controllers. Harry Price himself was present at 23 seances, Lord Charles Hope at 20, Miss Virginia Baggallay at 14, Professor A. F. C. Pollard at 9, Mrs. Herbert Baggallay at 7, Mrs. Mitcheson and Miss Elizabeth Williamson at 6, three persons were present 5 times, one 4 times, five 3 times, ten twice, and the remaining ninety-odd participants attended only once. Dr. Brown was said to have been chosen as controller because of his 'obviously sympathetic nature and charming personality', and Professor A. F. C. Pollard 'on account of his experience with psychics, medical knowledge and his genial personality'.

Of those who were previously known to the medium Dr. Karl Amereller attended five sittings and Major Kalifius three. Price was present at the majority, and he controlled a great deal of the time. Lord Charles Hope had provided much of the finance for the enterprise, but he was quite manifestly not in charge of the proceedings; Harry Price was. The majority of sitters

seem to have been deeply impressed with what they experienced, and the scientists, notably Professor Pollard, Dr. Brown and Lord Rayleigh, were sufficiently interested to think it worth while participating in further investigations.

Mr. Price was entirely satisfied with the results:

If Rudi were 'exposed' a hundred times in the future, it would not invalidate or affect to the slightest degree our considered judgment that the boy has produced genuine abnormal phenomena while he has been at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. . . . We have no fault to find with Rudi; he has cheerfully consented to our holding any test or any seance with any sitter or controller. He is the most tractable medium who has ever come under my notice. Mediumship amuses him—and bores him. He would much rather be playing football. . . . 'What does Rudi make out of his mediumship? This question is usually asked by someone who is completely ignorant of the Schneider brothers or their mediumship, because it is quite well known that the Austrian boys have never received payment for their service, as such *though there is no earthly reason why they should not*. I once saw this question hinted at in the Press, but I suppose it never occurred to that particular newspaperman that Rudi was just as much entitled to be paid for *his* services as was the journalist who made money by writing about him. The most extraordinary notion has got abroad that if you are a medium you must work for nothing!

As a matter of fact, we paid Rudi only what he would have earned at his trade, from which we took him. We *ought* to have paid him more, but so many other expenses were incurred through the investigation that we did not remunerate him as much as we would have liked. . . . Our Rudi investigation may well become a classic, and the cylinders of the dictaphone—which are being preserved—may some day adorn a museum devoted to the birth of a science which is destined to revolutionise—and perhaps even regenerate—mankind.<sup>44</sup>

By no means everyone shared Mr. Price's exalted opinion of his investigation. He was very widely disliked and distrusted, though this strong antipathy, for obvious reasons, hardly ever found its way into print. It does, however, emerge quite clearly from the unpublished correspondence.<sup>45</sup> Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for example, in a letter to Dr. Eugène Osty in Paris dated 6 September 1928, alludes to an incident in New York at which Sir Arthur was alleged to have kissed his (presumably deceased) mother's hand; Sir Arthur writes that this seance was entirely fraudulent, and that it must be Price 'who must be cheating' (IMI). Conan Doyle was during those years one of the very active members of the Society for Psychical Research, and antagonism on his part doubtless counted for a good deal. I do not doubt that one of the 'enemies' of his to whom Price alluded in his 'Plea for a better understanding' was Conan Doyle.

Although the latter was not, so far as I am aware, opposed to the idea of physical phenomena as such, a considerable and influential section of the Society for Psychical Research has in the past taken the line that, whereas

<sup>44</sup> H. Price (footnote 9), 219; italics inserted.

<sup>45</sup> Much of the correspondence that follows is preserved in the archives of the *Institut Métapsychique International*, 1, Place Wagram, 75 Paris 17 C. It is not organised in any particular way apart from being included in the general correspondence of the *Institut* in very roughly chronological order. I shall refer to these documents by 'IMI' in the text and footnotes. Translations, unless otherwise stated, are by me.

the evidence for mental phenomena is virtually cast-iron, that for physical phenomena is so ephemeral as to be negligible. Among these was Mrs. Sidgwick, Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge.

After the publication of Price's book *Rudi Schneider* in 1930 Mrs. Sidgwick wrote a letter to Mr. W. H. Salter marked 'private' in which she gave her candid and wholly unflattering opinion of Price's Rudi investigations in his First and Second Series.<sup>46</sup> Mrs. Sidgwick did not unfortunately permit her privately expressed views to be published at the time. This is a pity although, in view of the virulence of Harry Price's vindictiveness against those who crossed him, understandable. Her suggestion was that Rudi might have employed some smart boy or girl, perhaps some servant, to perform tricks from within the cabinet, and that this confederate could have escaped the notice of, for example, Lord Charles Hope and Professor Pollard, who were sitting in the cabinet at the time with the express purpose of catching any hypothetical confederate there. Since the cabinet was formed by an arc of curtains of width 7 ft. 3 inches, height 8 ft., and sides of cabinet from angle of wall to curtains 4 ft. 10 inches, it is difficult to see how two grown presumably sane men could have missed even the 'sharpest' accomplice.

*Could* Rudi have employed a 'sharp boy or girl'? The principal argument against it is that no evidence (other than the phenomena themselves) has ever been produced or even hinted at to the effect that Rudi hired anyone, or was in a position to do so. His English was virtually non-existent, he had no contacts in London and little money, his phenomena in London started almost as soon as he arrived, and I also find it hard to imagine how such a servant or other intruder could have, for so long, gone undetected and unsuspected by the sitters, many of whom were highly critical.

Furthermore, the fact that the experimenters should have been in a position to introduce a person into the cabinet *without the medium's knowledge* is of course by no means the same as the supposition that someone could have been smuggled in *without the experimenters' knowledge*. It is one thing for a number of people to arrange to secrete someone in the cabinet whilst Rudi's attention could be deflected; it is quite another for a confederate, a stranger to all concerned, to evade the sitters and experimenters night after night. Of course, by positing a sufficiently complex conspiracy such complicity could certainly be envisaged, and in the case of the Harry Price investigation quite a sizeable number of people were not at all prepared to assert categorically that it was unthinkable to suppose that Mr. Price was staging, for purposes of publicity or self-aggrandisement, or some other disreputable motive, a fraudulent charade. Indeed, he could have done this without the faintest complicity on Rudi's part.

Such a supposition could of course never be uttered in so many words. A quite specific incident had taken place between the First and Second Series in the summer of 1929, which had put Price's good faith in question among the inner circle of those who most concerned themselves with the investigation of psychical phenomena. Mr. Charles Sutton of the *Daily Mail* subsequently claimed that he had caught Price helping things along at Borley, but his Editor refused to allow him to publish this. Sutton's were not the only suspicions that were aroused at Borley: Lord Charles Hope also became

<sup>46</sup> E. Sidgwick to W. H. Salter, letter of 24 September 1930 (KMG).

convinced that Price was responsible for at any rate some of the Borley phenomena. Price had visited Borley for the first time on 12 June 1929, and Lord Charles Hope was present on two occasions, namely 5 and 29 July. Hope's suspicions date back to his first visit, that of 5 July,<sup>47</sup> and he was now in the unenviable position of thoroughly distrusting Rudi's chief investigator whilst being increasingly convinced that the Rudi phenomena were genuine. He had largely financed the Price investigation of Rudi, and he had been present at most of the seances. He had come to distrust Price between the first preliminary spring seances, and the main series in the autumn and winter of 1929. He had satisfied himself, however, that whatever might apparently have been the explanation of the Borley phenomena, it did not seem that Price could have been producing Rudi's effects. We can be quite certain that after the events of the summer of 1929, at Borley, Lord Charles kept a very careful eye on the doings of Harry Price.

Hope was a keen and painstaking student of psychical research. He kept very much in the background and only relatively few people were, or are, aware of the years of effort and patience, and of the large sums of money, that he devoted to psychical research. He was generally respected as a keenly critical and cautious investigator, and considerable quantities of detailed and informative letters (in, alas, appalling handwriting) bear eloquent testimony to his industry, his accuracy, his tact, his caution and his scrupulous fairness.

I have asked Miss Elizabeth Williamson, who was a frequent sitter at Harry Price's, to comment on her experience with Rudi. Her reply was that the sittings left her with a suspended judgment: Rudi himself struck her as a simple and honest person whereas, to the best of her recollection, she found Price distasteful and untrustworthy in the extreme.<sup>48</sup> Like so many other sitters, she disliked the gramophone records and the 'surrounding haze of nonsense'. The latter shortcomings were certainly not Price's fault: they were the same, much to most investigators' fury, wherever Rudi went. Now Miss Williamson (at that time assistant at the University of London Observatory, Mill Hill) was certainly not in the charmed S.P.R. circle which could be said to have been carrying on a long-standing feud with Harry Price, and this was and remained her only experience of paranormal phenomena. She says, however, that her aversion to Price may to some extent have been increased by, later on, seeing him through Lord Charles Hope's eyes. Concerning Lord Charles Hope, Miss Williamson says that his interest in psychical research was serious and that he worked hard at it, and that he never seemed lacking in a critical and intelligent standard in these matters.<sup>49</sup>

In October 1930 Rudi went to Paris as previously arranged, to be investigated by Dr. Osty at the *Institut Métapsychique*. Phenomena were ever weaker and less frequent. However, as has been mentioned, Dr. Osty made the interesting and important observation that whatever it was that Rudi, or 'Olga', could accomplish psychokinetically, apparently affected an infra-red beam even when it was too feeble to produce macrophysical phenomena such as lifting a handkerchief.

<sup>47</sup> E. J. Dingwall, K. M. Goldney and T. Hall, *The haunting of Borley Rectory* (1956, London: Duckworth); also in *Proc. SPR*, 51 (1956).

<sup>48</sup> E. Williamson, personal communication, 6 June 1967.

<sup>49</sup> E. Williamson, personal communication, 18 June 1967.

Mr. Theodore Besterman, who was among the most critical of all of Rudi's investigators (he subsequently participated in an all but negative series) and who carefully examined the laboratory set-up in Paris, considered that it would have been impossible for Dr. Osty and his collaborators to engage in a fraudulent conspiracy: they could not, in his view, have produced the results actually obtained. Besterman concluded: 'I am satisfied, failing the discovery by the investigators of unforeseen circumstances, that the medium Rudi Schneider did during the sittings under review [the Osty Paris sittings] extrude under partial mental control invisible and non-photographable substance capable of partly absorbing and/or refracting an infra-red ray and of oscillating in it at a rate double that of his rate of respiration . . .'.<sup>50</sup>

### 7. Price's Third Series of experiments

After spending Christmas 1931 at home Rudi returned to London on 3 February 1932 for the famous (or infamous) Third Series at Price's National Laboratory of Psychical Research. He was accompanied by his fiancée, Miss Mitzi Mängl, who had also been with him in Paris. Looking back over the press cuttings with all the wisdom of hindsight, one can tell that there was something ominous about his reception by the British press. Most of the daily papers carried pictures of Rudi and Mitzi complete with commentary to the effect that the world's highest paid medium had just come to London for tests.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Rudi was being paid £10 per week in addition to his expenses and those of his fiancée. Gone were the days of the former visit, when Harry Price had ridiculed persons who had dared to suggest the notion that mediums should work for nothing; when he had asserted that, if only it had been possible, of course he would and should have paid Rudi more than the equivalent of what he would have earned as a motor mechanic! It must have been obvious to anyone in the know that Harry Price, who always managed Rudi's British publicity, was turning against him.

Rudi gave 27 seances in all during his sojourn in London, from 9 February to 5 May. Of these eight were totally negative, and many others very nearly so. However, as will be seen, some of the occasions on which 'the force' was operative were sufficiently impressive to a number of eminent scientists to induce them to stake their reputations on public declarations that what they had witnessed could not be explained by normal means. Harry Price decided not to employ the electrical control by which he set so much store. Why not must remain a matter for conjecture. But two innovations were introduced at his Third Series of sittings at the National Laboratory. One of these was devised by Price himself, a mechanism for automatically photographing the phenomena (see figure 9). He

constructed a box table on four legs (15 inches square, 18½ inches high and weighing 10 pounds 9 ounces) with a loose top balanced on knife edges. The underside of this loose top, at one end, was weighted with a strip of copper (weighing a little less than a pocket handkerchief) which caused the top to just overbalance, coming to rest on another strip of copper. The two pieces of copper were part of an electric circuit, and when they came in contact the circuit was closed.

<sup>50</sup> T. Besterman, 'The mediumship of Rudi Schneider', *Proc. SPR*, **40** (1931-32), 428-436.

<sup>51</sup> For example, *Daily Sketch*, 8 February 1932; *Daily Telegraph*, 4 February 1932; and *Evening News*, 18 April 1932.



If a handkerchief or other light object were placed on the unweighted side of the balanced top, it would cause the copper strips to part, thus breaking the circuit. In other words, the handkerchief just overbalanced the copper strip.

From the copper strips were taken insulated wires connected to a flashlight apparatus placed to the left of the counterpoised table. The apparatus could accommodate in its reflector from one to three flash bulbs. . . . These bulbs were fired electrically by means of a 4 volt battery contained in the apparatus.

On the table and the handkerchief placed upon it were focused during the experiments a number of cameras with lenses uncovered. A half-plate camera, a quarter-plate camera and a stereoscopic camera suspended by struts from the ceiling and immediately above the table, were used to automatically photograph the handkerchief if it were displaced by normal or supernormal means. A fourth 'control camera', half-plate, was set up at the far side of the seance room, and its wide-angle lens included in its focus the cabinet, medium, controllers, sitters, table, etc. The plates in all these cameras were exposed simultaneously by the same flash thus giving us several pictures of the same objects taken from different angles. . . .

To sum up, when the handkerchief was lifted (by any means) thus disturbing the poise of the balanced table-top, the flash bulbs were instantaneously ignited electrically and the handkerchief, table, etc., were automatically and simultaneously photographed from various angles. . . .

The proper functioning of the automatic photographing apparatus was made possible only because of the existence of silent, smokeless flashlight bulbs similar to those which I employed during the investigation of the claims of Mrs. Duncan. . . . These bulbs are similar to electric light bulbs, 6 inches in length and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, filled with a crumpled mass of aluminium foil, . . . the bulb is exhausted and pure oxygen is then admitted at low pressure. In fact, the bulb is a capsule or silent detonator, fired by a 4 volt battery, serving to ignite the metallic aluminium which burns with an intense and highly actinic light and quite silently. These bulbs are made in Germany where they are known as the Vaku-Blitz. The speed of the flash is about  $\frac{1}{75}$ th of a second.<sup>52</sup>

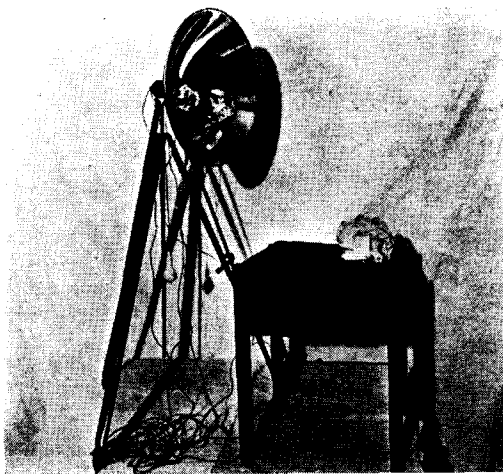


Figure 9.

Counterpoise box table and 'Vaku-Blitz' apparatus employed by Harry Price during Third Series for automatically photographing the displacement of an object. Plate 11, p. 24 of *Bulletin IV of National Laboratory of Psychical Research* (footnote 10).

<sup>52</sup> H. Price (footnote 10), 11-12.

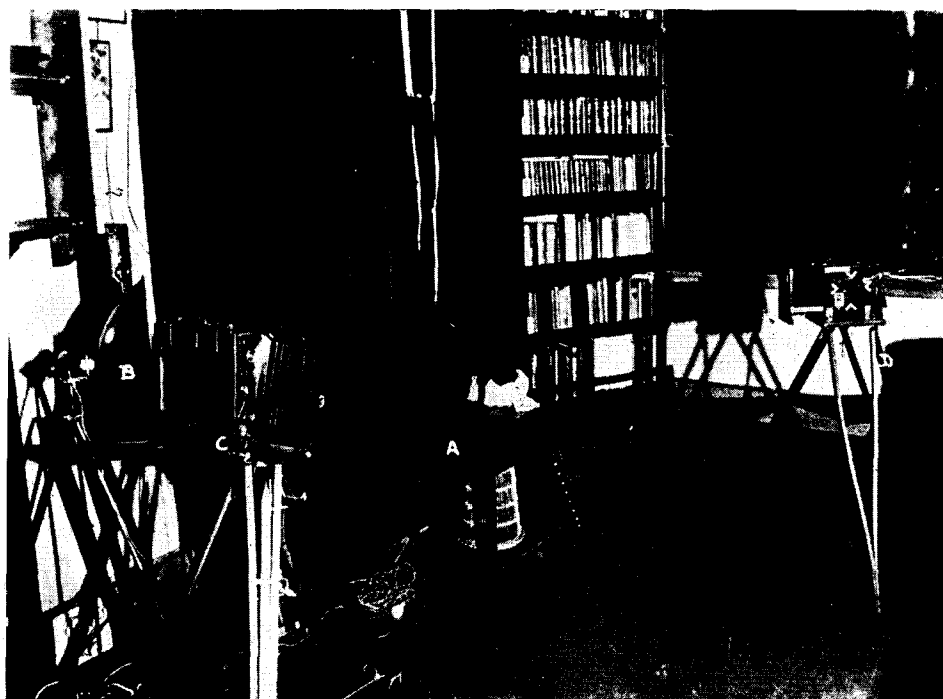


Figure 10.

Electrical installation for automatic photographing of an object placed on counterpoise box table A; 'Vaku-Blitz' flash light B on the left; cameras C and D. Overhead camera is not included. Seance arrangements by Harry Price during the Third Series. Plate III, p. 24 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

The other novel feature—new at least for the English investigators—was the introduction of infra-red ray installation similar in principle to that employed by Dr. Osty in Paris (see figure 10). This however was not made by Price; it was constructed at the University of London Observatory by C. C. L. Gregory, who was the Observatory's Director, Head of the Department of Astronomy and Wilson Observer in the University of London, together with C. V. C. Herbert (now the Earl of Powis), who was at that time a research student at the Observatory. The object of this device was to see whether Dr. Eugène Osty's observations could be duplicated in London. Price describes it as follows:

Inside a gauze cage 4 feet 4 inches long, by 1 foot 9 inches high, and 1 foot 7 inches wide, was placed at one end a 6 volt lamp and reflector in a light-tight box. In front of the box was placed a filter which allowed only infra-red rays to pass through it. The infra-red beam traversed the length of the box, striking a selenium cell or 'bridge' at the other end. By means of a suitable amplifier, relay and battery a bell could be made to ring if the beam were interrupted. If a foreign body (such as the hand) were placed in the cage so as to intercept the beam, the bell would ring. But if something less dense intercepted the beam, the bell might not ring, but the amount of interference could be read on the 0.5 milliammeter which was connected to the apparatus by insulated wires led to the note-taker's table, where an observer

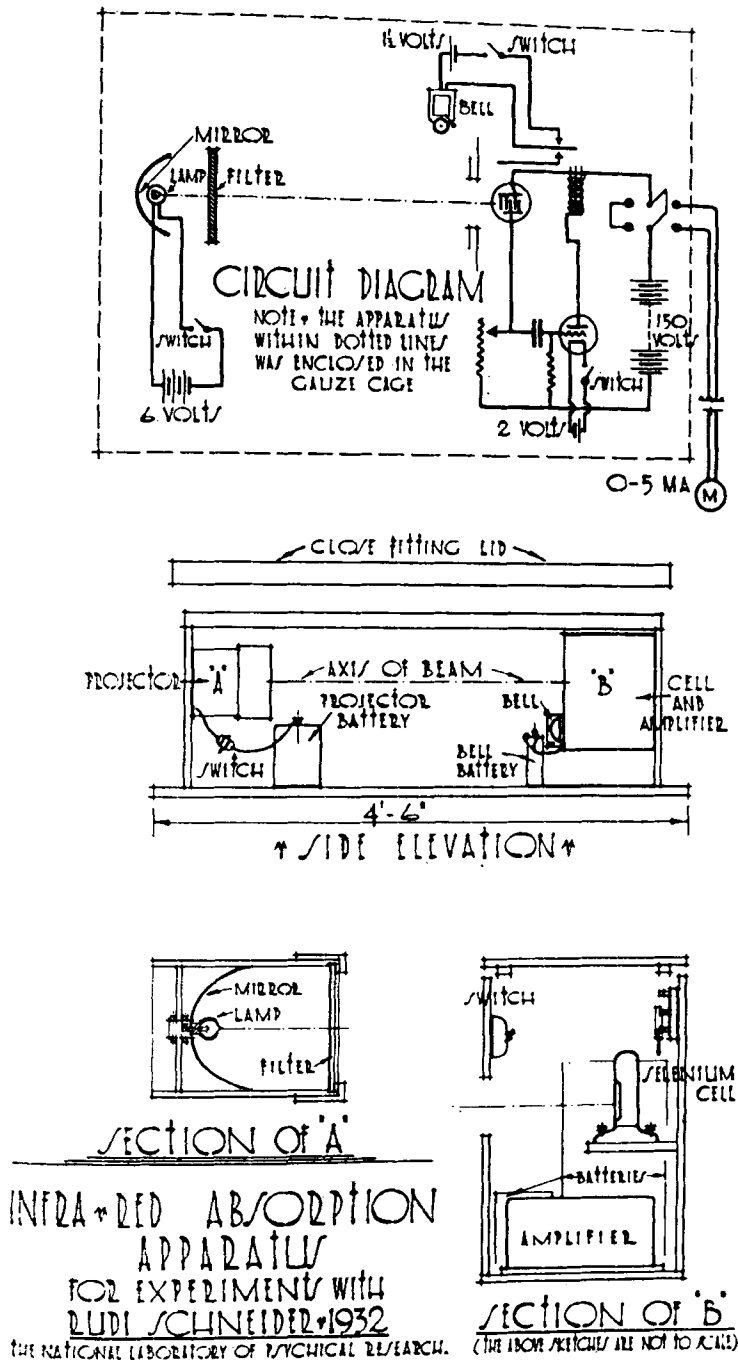


Figure 11.

Circuit diagram and sketch of infra-red absorption apparatus used at Harry Price's Third Series. Plate IV, p. 32 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

was placed with the meter in front of him. Except for the wires and the milliammeter, the apparatus was totally enclosed in the gauze cage or box, over which was placed a close-fitting lid with a gauze top. This lid was sealed to the box by means of adhesive tape. It will be seen that to affect the needle of the meter (which was set to read 6 milliamps for a full scale deflection) the disturbing object, 'force', 'power' or 'energy' would first have to penetrate the gauze before it could intercept the infra-red beams.

In order to test whether Rudi or 'Olga' could project some emanation which could affect the beam, a handkerchief was placed inside the cage under the beam. If an attempt were made to displace the handkerchief from above, the beam would be intercepted and the bell would ring—that is, if the foreign body were dense enough. In order to understand the functioning of the selenium bridge, the non-technical reader should know that selenium possesses the curious property of changing its electrical resistance when light strikes upon it. . . .<sup>53</sup>

The circuit diagram and sketch of infra-red absorption apparatus are reproduced as figure 11.

The phenomena observed during the Third Series were similar to those that had taken place in previous investigations. Objects were moved, the wastepaper basket was wrenched from people's hands, the curtains billowed, the handkerchief was knotted and tugged and displaced, people felt themselves touched, and experienced the curious feeling of extreme cold that is so characteristic of physical sittings, 'materialised' partial forms were seen, and the infra-red apparatus worked and recorded occultations similar to those obtained by Dr. Osty. Harry Price obtained a number of photographs of the phenomena. These purported to demonstrate the displacement of objects taken by the same flash that shows sitters and medium in place whilst the movements were taking place (see, for example, figures 12–15). The plates are still in existence at the Harry Price Library, at Senate House, University of London.

Rudi left for Austria on 6 May 1932. So far as those involved in the investigation were concerned, nothing particularly spectacular had happened that had not occurred time and time again under rather better conditions of control. However, a number of scientists, notably Dr. William Brown and Professor Fraser-Harris, became absolutely convinced of the authenticity of the phenomena and took the very bold step of vouching for their conviction in print. At the same time, tension, to put it mildly, became manifest between Harry Price and the other investigators. Lord Charles Hope made arrangements for an independent investigation under his own control and that of Lord Rayleigh in the autumn of 1932, the 'Hope-Rayleigh investigation'.

On 5 March 1933, nearly a year after the conclusion of the Third Series and immediately before the publication of the Hope-Rayleigh results, Harry Price published an article in the *Sunday Dispatch* denouncing Rudi as a fraud. On the following day appeared the *Bulletin IV of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research*, 'A minute-by-minute record of 27 seances', being Price's version of the Third Series in which he published, in addition to the photographs already reproduced earlier and several others, certain pictures purporting to show that on one occasion, namely on 28 April 1932, when Price himself had acted as controller, Rudi had freed an arm at the same time as the allegedly

(continued on page 491)

<sup>53</sup> H. Price (footnote 10), 13–14.



Figure 12.

Photograph purporting to show handkerchief climbing into space after displacement from the counterpoise table automatically photographed at the 9th seance (Third Series), 3 March 1932. The little toy tortoise is not disturbed. The lifting up of the handkerchief has released the automatic photographic arrangements. It is not clear from the seance record at exactly what point in time during the seance this photograph was taken, nor whether the handkerchief is supposed to be in the process of knotting itself. Plate IX, p. 88 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

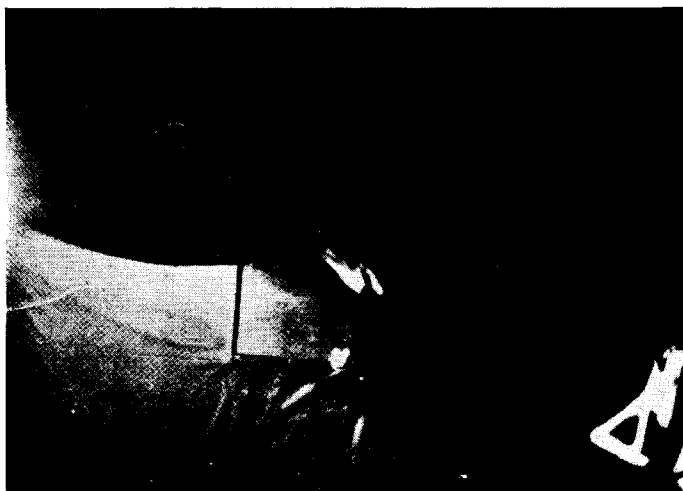


Figure 13.

Photograph taken by a ceiling camera referring to the same incident as that photographed in figure 12. Plate X, p. 88 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

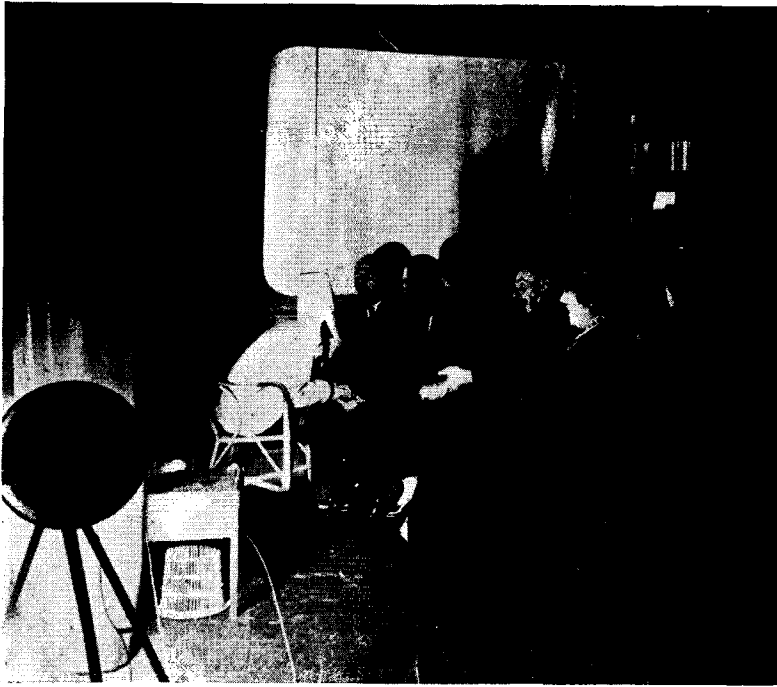


Figure 14.

Control photograph showing medium, sitters and counterpoise table with handkerchief, said to be triggered off automatically by the same flash that produced figures 12 and 13. Price is 'controlling': note his left hand not actually holding Rudi's hands. Note also Rudi's cane arm chair. Plate XI, p. 98 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

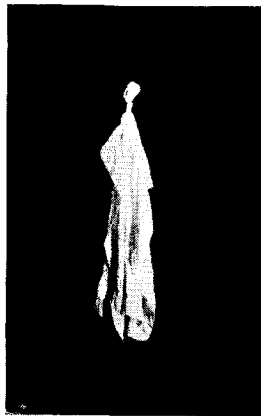


Figure 15.

Handkerchief alleged to have been knotted paranormally at the 9th seance, 3 March 1932; Plate XII, p. 114 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

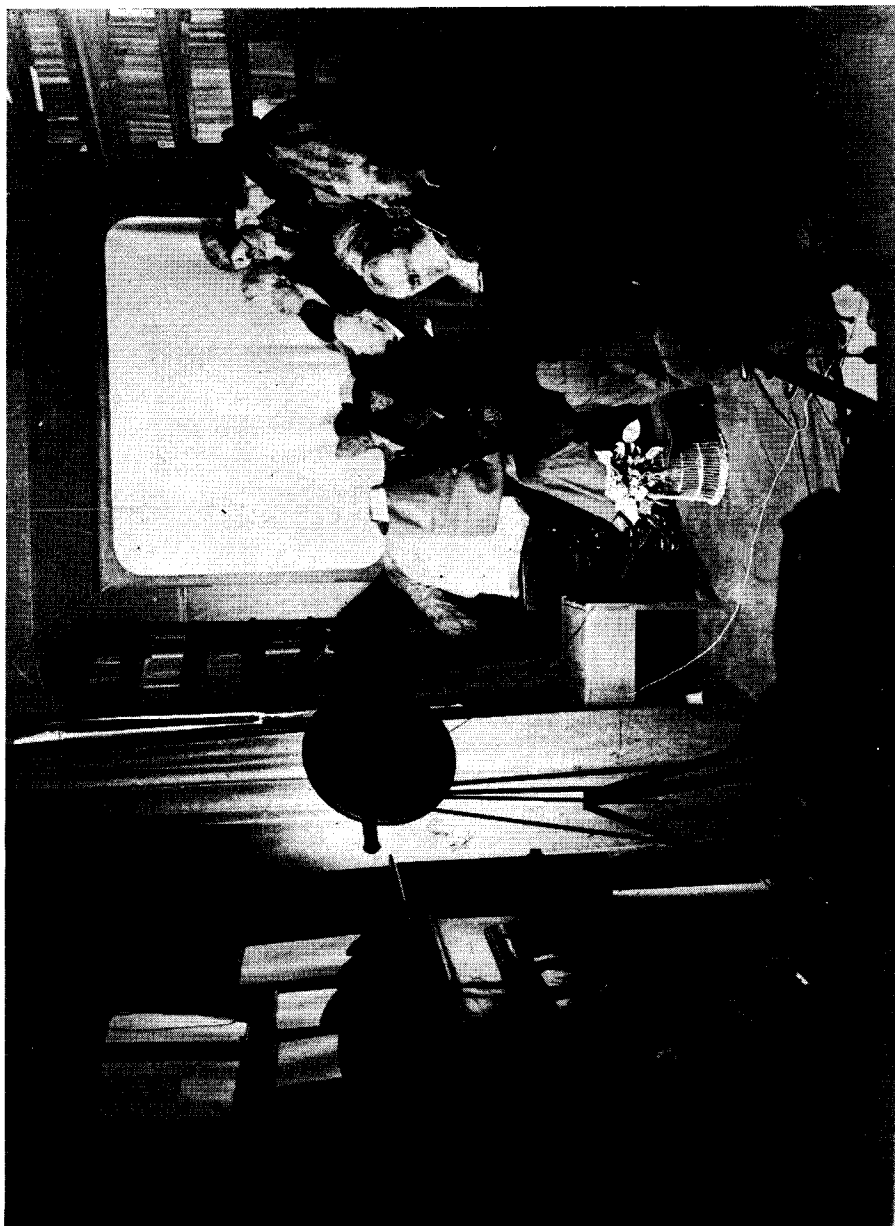


Figure 16.

A photograph prepared from plate No. 530, box 35, at Harry Price Library, after the obscuring brown paper had been removed. This is clearly the plate from which plate XX, on p. 176 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10) had been taken, on which Price's accusation of fraud against Rudi Schneider was based. The original illustration is too poorly defined to be worth reproducing in addition.

paranormal phenomenon of displacement of a handkerchief was taking place (see figure 16). Price added a good deal of disparaging comment on Rudi's mediumship, throwing in for good measure a photograph supplied by Captain Kogelnik eight years previously, referring to an unspecified seance some dozen or more years ago when *Willy Schneider* was supposed to have cheated (see figure 17).

Price's alleged exposure of Rudi caused a furore, and it may well be the case that psychical research has never had a more serious set-back than the Price-Schneider scandal. To the casual observer it will not be immediately obvious why the ensuing row was quite such a debacle. Even if one takes Harry Price's allegations at their face value and accepts that on one occasion Rudi managed to free his arm when Price was controlling, what of it? Supposing that at that particular seance Rudi pushed the handkerchief off the table by very normal means either deliberately, since his powers were undoubtedly waning, or possibly because his secondary personality induced him to do it; this still left a large number of occasions to be explained when he did not free an arm and phenomena were observed and recorded. The



Figure 17.

Detail from a flashlight photograph taken in Braunau by Captain Kogelnik, showing Rudi's elder brother Willy at a home seance. This was sent to Harry Price by Captain Kogelnik on 23 May 1925. The arrow points to what could be a safety pin fixing white shapes to the curtain. Kogelnik was a frequent early sitter at the Schneiders' house, fully persuaded of the authenticity of phenomena produced by both brothers, but at times critical of early seance conditions. Plate XXII, p. 188 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).



most important of these phenomena indeed could not have been duplicated by a freed arm.

Scientifically what was and is at stake is whether or not physical effects are sometimes produced by other than the usually accepted physical means, and not whether a given medium always produces genuine phenomena whenever his investigators thought he did. Harry Price knew this perfectly well. However, he also understood how his *Sunday Dispatch* denunciation would be taken by the public at large: namely, as a total repudiation of Rudi's phenomena—until such time as the public at large had forgotten all about it. Price never had any intention of dismissing all Rudi's phenomena. Indeed, his motives were only too obvious to all those involved: to discredit his 'enemies', that is, those researchers who had 'taken Rudi away from him' and who had declined to accept him as the ultimate and final authority on the phenomena of Rudi Schneider; and to establish his own 1929 series, with 'his' electrical control in action, written up in his book *Rudi Schneider* (1930) as the sole authoritative investigation of Rudi's phenomena. His case, stated baldly, now was that Rudi's powers had since 1929 waned to such an extent that he had ever since resorted to fraud, and that consequently the Osty and the Hope-Rayleigh investigations, both of which claimed positive results, were worthless. He, Price, had been astute enough to catch Rudi, whereas they had been fooled.

Although scientifically it is not in itself especially interesting whether on a particular occasion Rudi had or had not, deliberately or otherwise, freed an arm while phenomena were in progress, both morally and emotionally it was a major issue. An accusation of fraud was brought against a young man who had never objected to any conditions imposed upon him by his investigators, who was a stranger in a country the language of which he did not even understand, who had unreservedly put himself into the hands of his hosts, and who regarded his investigators as well-wishers and called Price 'Onkel Harry'.

This accusation was brought nearly a year after the alleged incident, and referred to an occasion when it was Price's responsibility as controller to see to it that Rudi did not evade control. None of Price's co-investigators, with one exception that will be discussed, had been consulted or shown the evidence. On the contrary, *after* the alleged incident Price continued to vouch for Rudi's total genuineness and honesty to all and sundry, defended him in letters to the Editor of *Nature* and other scientists, and more than encouraged members of the investigating body to stake their scientific reputation on Rudi's genuineness. Their feelings towards Price can readily be imagined, particularly when he virtuously censured them for having been rather hasty in rushing into print as regards their convictions!

By no means everyone was satisfied that Price's double exposure constituted any demonstration of fraud or attempted fraud on Rudi's part. It was very odd that Price himself was controlling on the incriminating photograph. Could he really have let go Rudi's hand without knowing that he had done so? Price said he had had a violent attack of tooth ache on that occasion and was not really in a fit state to control. Why then did he do so? If he was in so very poor a condition of health, why not ask one of the others present to take his place? Why had he immediately disconnected the photographic apparatus after the double-flash seance, so that no further photographs could be taken? And above all, if the double exposure really, in his opinion, constituted proof

of fraud, why had he kept the photograph a deep secret and sprung it on the world over ten months later, instead of at once sharing this vital information with his fellow investigators, especially those whom he had, during this time, pressured to vouch for Rudi's authenticity in print? And why had he unreservedly vouched for Rudi's integrity, in writings published and unpublished, over and over again, after the alleged 'discovery'?

### 8. Background of Price's denunciation of Rudi Schneider

In order to understand what turned Harry Price's particularly high regard for Lord Charles Hope and Dr. Eugène Osty and his admiration and even affection for Dr. William Brown and Professor Fraser-Harris and their colleagues into virulent hatred, one must go behind the scenes and examine contemporary records. To make it easier to follow the sequence of events, a time table of some of the relevant key happenings and documents is given in table 2.

October 1929	Price's attempt at merger with Osty's <i>Institut Métapsychique</i> .
November 1930	Price's attempt at merger with London S.P.R.
February 1931	Annual General Meeting of S.P.R., at which merger is turned down.
March 1931	Price's attempt to induce Osty to publish Duncan 'teleplasm' paper.
July 1931	Price, K. M. Goldney and E. Beenham visit Braunau; Rudi and Mitzi invited to London in October.
August 1931	Price dis-invites Mitzi. Rudi refuses to go to London.
November 1931	Quartier's scathing review of Price's teleplasm paper appears in <i>Revue métapsychique</i> .
15 January 1932	Osty warns Price against Mitzi.
3 February 1932	Rudi arrives in London for Third Series.
22 March 1932	Infra-red apparatus constructed at University of London Observatory works. For the first time it is used at a sitting.
12 April 1932	First written reference to Hope-Price row, letter Hope to Price.
18 April 1932	German Brocken 'experiment' organisers in London.
26 April 1932	Major row at Council meeting of National Laboratory of Psychical Research.
28 April 1932	<i>Seance No. 25, at which double exposure purporting to demonstrate fraud was allegedly taken.</i>
3 May 1932	Sitting by which Dr. William Brown is particularly impressed.
4 May 1932	Letter from Price to Fraser-Harris: Osty sittings claimed as being authoritative and Brown 'worth a dozen of Hope and scientific friends'.
7 May 1932	William Brown's first letter to <i>Times</i> .
8 May 1932	Rudi leaves London.
9 May 1932	Fraser-Harris's letter to <i>Times</i> .
10 May 1932	Price to Professor Ach; a 'new epoch' as result of Brown's letter to <i>Times</i> .
10 May 1932	Brown to Price, asking him to cut down on publicity.
12 May 1932	Price to von Hofsten, throwing him out of National Laboratory for belated denunciation of Rudi.
14 May 1932	William Brown's second letter to <i>Times</i> .
14 May 1932	Price to Brown; 'never once has Rudi dictated conditions', and protesting against supposed disparagement of Osty's <i>Institut Métapsychique</i> .
25 May 1932	Hope asks Osty to give Myers Memorial Lecture; offers financial support for Osty-Rudi investigation.

Table 2 (*continued*)

27 May 1932	Price letter to Rudi, warning him against S.P.R., 'you will regret it all your life'.
17 June 1932	Night on Brocken mountain.
6 July 1932	Article on Brocken 'experiment' in <i>Listener</i> .
13 July 1932	Price to Fraser-Harris 'not a shred of evidence that Rudi ever cheated'.
27 July 1932	Price to Editor of <i>Nature</i> , upholding Osty's work, claiming full responsibility of his co-investigators, and vouching for Rudi's authenticity.
1 September 1932	Long letter from Price to Rudi; 'suspicious looking photograph' reference in paragraph 8.
September 1932	Culmination of Price-Brown written quarrel concerning Brown's allegedly 'soliciting publicity'.
23 September 1932	Osty to M. Olliver, who had in London heard rumours of Rudi's 'accomplice'.
October November December	1932 Rudi in London for Hope-Rayleigh investigation.
5 March 1933	
6 May 1933	Price's article in <i>Sunday Dispatch</i> denouncing Rudi as fraudulent. Price to Editor of <i>Nature</i> , claiming that Rudi had refused point blank to sit without Mitzi, denouncing Rudi as fraudulent.

Table 2.

Timetable giving some of the key events and documents relating to Harry Price's 'exposure' of Rudi Schneider on 5 March 1933.

8.1. *Relations with French researchers.* In October 1929, whilst Price was in the middle of his Second Series and Osty was examining Rudi in Paris for the first time, Price approached Osty with a view to amalgamating his own National Laboratory of Psychical Research with the Paris *Institut Métapsychique International*. These negotiations seem to have been kept completely secret, but the correspondence is preserved at the Paris *Institut*. I was certainly most astonished when I came across it there.

In a long letter dated October 25 1932 Price set out the conditions of the proposed amalgamation (IMI). The contents of his laboratory, an itemised account of which he gave, were to be transferred to Paris as well as Price's library, at the cost of the *Institut Métapsychique*, in return for which Price was to be given a position on the Council or other committee, and to have access to the work of the *Institut*. The address and title were to remain in London for correspondence purposes. The property was valued at £7000, of which £5000 was estimated to be the value of the books. Price was to make the first announcement of the merger. 'It is understood, of course', he wrote, 'that the suggested amalgamation has also to be confirmed by our Council but I think that is merely formal . . . '.

Whatever may have been Price's hold over his own Council (and events were to show that this was by no means composed of such yes-men as he imagined) his offer was eventually turned down by the Paris researchers: on 4 November 1929 Osty wrote to Price, thanking him in the name of the members of the Committee for the generous offer and declining it on the grounds that in the view of the Committee they needed all their rooms for their own purposes (IMI). Osty added that he personally had hoped for a

different outcome; but new projects had been planned requiring much more extensive instrumentation than previously, and he ended by expressing his personal goodwill.

Price did not take this refusal in good part. His reply dated 8 November 1929 is curt, saying that 'this is quite different from what Professor Richet said in his letter' (IMI). I have not been able to find Richet's letter to Price on this subject. There can be little doubt that Price took the French rejection as a personal affront on Osty's part, the latter's affability notwithstanding.

There followed a cooling off in relations between Price and Osty. When Price suggested that his secretary, Miss Lucy Kaye, should accompany Rudi to Paris as a companion, Osty thanked him politely and declined on 17 February 1930, on the grounds that he would prefer someone who spoke Rudi's language (IMI). Price replied: 'I note that you do not want to see Rudi established . . .' (IMI). On 28 February 1930 Price wrote to Osty that he was sorry that Rudi was having a bad patch: 'I am wondering if "Olga" would be more gracious if "Uncle Harry" were present! I suppose Rudi is not home-sick or unwell?' (IMI). But Osty did not rise to the bait: at any rate no reply is on record.

On 9 April 1930 Dr. Gerda Walther, Schrenck-Notzing's former personal assistant, who was also a friend of the Schneider family and very active on the German parapsychological scene, wrote a letter to Price (in HPL) which I personally, in view of what happened, regard as fateful and significant. In this she wrote:

April 9 1930

. . . Is it true the investigators in Paris intend to let Rudi sit without the least control, just to put him on a chair without even holding his hands, and then let things go as they may, photographing all with their new apparatus? I think that would be a very bad thing indeed. You know Rudi has very violent jerks in trance very often, he might fall from his chair or hurt himself some way if nobody holds him. Besides he might make some movement of the hands or feet towards the cabinet or the objects that are to be moved, meaning no harm, not even knowing what he does, when he isn't held. Yet if this movement was photographed his adversaries would be sure to jump upon it and say it was a proof of fraud. I don't like the idea at all. Why not control him electrically or at least by two sitters as usual and then photograph the phenomena in the dark? Can't you do something to press upon Osty how important this is? You know how it was in Budapest when Mr. Besterman 'controlled' the medium Layos Papp. He let go Papp's hand and then said he tried to make the phenomena himself with his free hand. . . .

Price does not seem to have passed on the warning to Osty. However, in my view at least, he remembered it well enough.

It will be recalled that meanwhile Lord Charles Hope had reached the conviction that Price was not entirely trustworthy on account of his conduct in connection with the poltergeist phenomena at Borley rectory. On 13 July 1930 he wrote to Osty (IMI):

. . . I know that Mr. Price at one time entertained the idea of asking Rudi Schneider to visit the National Laboratory again this coming autumn. I have told Mr. Price that in my opinion nothing further could be achieved by another similarly conducted series of seances in London and that I consider it of much greater importance that Rudi should visit the *Institut Métapsychique* . . . I would be willing to make a considerable donation for that special purpose . . . I make this proposal in a purely private capacity and not as in any way connected with the National Laboratory of Psychological Research. . . .

Osty gratefully acknowledged the offer, and eventually the sum of 2000 francs. Despite his misgivings it was Lord Charles Hope also who largely financed Price's investigations in London.

In March 1931 Osty received a typescript of an article by Harry Price on the subject of the microscopic analysis of 'a teleplasm'. This analysis, so Price stated in an accompanying letter dated 9 March 1931, was supposed to have been performed by 'the most eminent analytic chemist in England' (HPL). Osty's reaction was: '... I have read your article on the chemical and microscopic examination of the alleged teleplasm. Do you now think that it would be of vital importance to be quite certain, *absolutely certain*, that you are dealing with actual teleplasm? The publication of such an article would meet with tough opposition. I don't advise it ...' (HPL). Price replied (HPL and IMI):

... Re the portion of teleplasm which I secured. Personally I am convinced of its genuineness. Several portions were taken and other persons including Sir Oliver Lodge have received specimens. Owing to the jealousy of another Society I am unable to give full particulars as to how I got it and where it came from. But someone will eventually write a paper on it and I want to be the first. A piece of my portion was handed to the most eminent analyst in London and his report coincides with my deductions. ...

Price was evidently undeterred by Osty's judgment and, determined to 'be the first', he went ahead and published his article in the Italian journal *Luce e ombra* in May 1931. However, as Osty was later to put it:

Mr. Harry Price, having failed to get himself invited to the seances of the medium whose teleplasms he had secretly received and analysed, could not content himself with the glory of being the first to publish his analysis; he also wished to anticipate the report of this group by one by himself in order, as usual, to shine in the pages of the press. To this end he had to obtain secretly the services of the famous medium. He got in touch with her husband and managed to have sittings with her without the knowledge of the investigating group. ...<sup>54</sup>

In point of fact, as a result of these investigations Harry Price published a lengthy article, 'Regurgitation and the Duncan mediumship', purporting to show that Mrs. Helen Duncan, the medium in question, was a fraud who produced the supposed materialisations by means of cheesecloth that she swallowed and regurgitated during seances.<sup>55</sup>

Osty took the line that the engineer had been hoist with his own petard, and published in the *Revue métapsychique* a most ironical review of Harry Price's own work on Mrs. Duncan by C. Quartier.<sup>56</sup> Harry Price's reaction (in IMI) was:

2 November 1931

In the article 'L'ectoplasme de Mrs. Duncan' which I find very amusing I think you do me rather an injustice as the article reads as if I believed—or rather accepted—the genuineness of the 'teleplasm'. As a matter of fact I reiterated that I was only concerned with the *analysis* of it. If *Luce e ombra*

<sup>54</sup> E. Osty, 'L'étrange conduite de M. Harry Price', *Extrait de la Revue métapsychique*, (Avril 1933), 110–125 (p. 114; my translation).

<sup>55</sup> H. Price, 'Regurgitation and the Duncan mediumship', *Bulletin I of the National Laboratory of Psychological Research*, (1931), 1–120.

<sup>56</sup> C. Quartier, review of Price (footnote 55), *Revue métapsychique*, 6 (1931), 447–448.

and other publications have elected to say more than I did, that is their affair. The reason why I so much desired to publish my article on the teleplasm was to give the Duncans confidence that they would come to my Laboratory. You know the rest. . . .

It is hard to see how Osty could have been expected to take Harry Price seriously after this. Price had plainly and in writing stated his faith in the 'teleplasm' and expressed his eagerness for priority of publication—only to repudiate both on the most barefaced grounds of expediency without any apparent recollection that he had ever thus expressed his faith, or that he had attempted to let Osty himself in for publishing the article—which he now declared to have been a pack of lies to deceive the medium and her husband! However, there was no immediate and open rupture. As we know, Price succeeded in obtaining Rudi's services, despite Lord Charles Hope's discouragement, for his Third Series February to May 1932, and even prevailed upon Hope to finance the venture to a large extent. If Hope had had more inside information concerning Price's dealings in connection with the Duncan mediumship, it seems more than doubtful if he would have had anything further to do with Price.

On 15 January 1932 Osty wrote a letter to Price which he was to regret bitterly, in which he advised Price not to allow Mitzi, Rudi's fiancée, to be present at seances: 'When there are no phenomena she tries to produce some and does so' (HPL and IMI). Osty also said that from October 1931 Rudi had not produced in Paris any physical phenomena discernible by the senses, and that without the instrumental arrangements it would have been a complete waste of time. Price replied on 18 January (HPL and IMI) to the effect that he was

. . . *very* grateful for the information. . . . If we are compelled to have Mitzi in the seance room sometimes, we will see that she is specially controlled. At our last sitting in Braunau in July Mitzi sat between Mrs. Goldney (a very intelligent member of our Council) and Miss Beenham, our Secretary. I am convinced that she could not have helped in any way as she was being thoroughly controlled. Now that Rudi has turned his mediumship into a profession (we have agreed to pay both their fares, hotel expenses and £10 per week) it is a great temptation for him to cheat if the genuine phenomena are not forthcoming. We were compelled to offer him £10 per week in addition to hotel expenses) because he said that was what he received in Paris. . . .

Osty answered (HPL) that Rudi himself had never occasioned the slightest suspicion.

In fact there had already been a good deal of feeling between Price and the Schneiders on the subject of Rudi's remuneration and conditions of employment. Price had, beyond a shadow of doubt, been deeply impressed by the seance he had in Braunau in July 1932 when he, jointly with Mrs. Goldney, Miss Beenham and Dr. Gerda Walther, had imposed very stringent control conditions indeed. He had on that occasion invited Rudi to London for sittings in September. Rudi had just become engaged to Mitzi Mängl who was, from that summer onwards till the end of his days, his constant companion. Rudi said he would not come to London without Mitzi, which is even more understandable if one remembers that he did not speak any English. So Price invited Mitzi with whose conduct *he* was obviously satisfied, to accompany

Rudi to London. Then, in September 1931, Price suddenly went back on this invitation without offering any explanation. Rudi had not been investigated in the meanwhile.

The reason for Price's sudden withdrawal of Mitzi's invitation was in fact financial: his Council were concerned about the expense involved in investigating Rudi.<sup>57</sup> Rudi, who had agreed to come to London provided he could bring his fiancée,<sup>58</sup> reacted by refusing to come at all, and Price sent him a sharp telegram demanding the advanced sum of money back. What had happened can be gathered from a letter by Vater Schneider to Harry Price's secretary:

13 October 1931

... We deeply regret that Rudi's intended journey came to nothing but Mr. Price is really to blame for that. Had he not sent the telegram demanding the return of the money in not exactly flattering words, Rudi would have left for London on the first of September. Mr. Price should understand that Rudi would like terms which should include everything, even the money question. The first time Rudi was in London he paid out of his own pocket 160/-, and in any case Rudi wanted to make sure how much money he would have to take along from home. Mr. Price's reproach that Rudi was beyond all price and greedy hurt Rudi's feelings very much indeed, for I myself know only too well how many hundreds, even thousands, of sittings Rudi has given without the smallest remuneration. This, and the fact that Mr. Price had originally included Mitzi in his invitation, caused Rudi to return the money and to unpack his bags. I myself know that Rudi had an invitation to come to London and was promised, apart from his board and lodgings, a salary of 1,000/- per month which, however, he declined only in consideration of Mr. Price.<sup>59</sup>

Osty had invited Mitzi to Paris and also paid Rudi a salary of £10 per week and expenses. Rudi was about to get married, he was concerned about his financial security, and he was no longer as pliable as regards 'Onkel Harry' as he had once been. If Price wanted him, he had to make some definite financial arrangements with him. It was, as a matter of fact, Lord Charles Hope who was paying most of the expenses, but Price did not like to be crossed: he had expected Rudi to come to heel and had looked somewhat foolish in the eyes of Professor William MacDougall, who had been promised a seance, when Rudi failed to turn up in London in response to Price's peremptory telegram. Price was doubly angry because he considered that his hand had been forced as regards terms by Dr. Osty, who had just gently laughed at him over the Duncan 'teleplasm' affair, and whose work on Rudi was being taken far more seriously by influential members of the Society for Psychical Research than Price's own.<sup>60</sup>

All this explains quite adequately the fact that when Rudi arrived for the fateful Third Series, the press unanimously proclaimed that London was witnessing the arrival of 'the highest paid medium in the world'.

<sup>57</sup> For example, a letter from V. A. B. W. Cochran-Baillie to C. Hope of 26 May 1933 (KMG).

<sup>58</sup> K. M. Goldney, special note with regard to Price's letter to *Nature* of 6 May 1933 (SPR files, ref. 8-10, special folder).

<sup>59</sup> Original and translation, probably by Mrs. de Gernon, in HPL.

<sup>60</sup> T. Besterman (footnote 50); also correspondence between T. Besterman and E. Osty, 1930 to 1932, in IMI.

8.2. *Relations with the London Society for Psychical Research.* Meanwhile there had been another important development exacerbating relations between Mr. Price and the world of psychical research which one has to consider in order to understand the emotional atmosphere behind the scenes before and during Rudi's third visit to London. Harry Price, having failed in amalgamating with the Paris *Institut*, about a year later launched an all-out offensive to merge his National Laboratory with the London Society for Psychical Research. On 12 November 1930 he addressed to all members of that Society a circular printed letter, marked 'Private and Confidential' and proposing this amalgamation. In it he said that his health was poor; that he was averse to joining forces with a society frankly spiritualistic, and that he was reluctant to let his Library and his Laboratory fall into foreign hands; that there remained the Society for Psychical Research. . . . He offered his books, his apparatus, the mediums he could attract and the transfer of all members of the National Laboratory who cared to join the move. 'In return I should of course expect to take a major part in all investigations brought about through my agency and generally to cooperate with the SPR [Society for Psychical Research]' (HPL). As the negotiations with the French *Institut Métapsychique* had been secret, no-one was in a position to point out that his library and apparatus had just escaped 'falling into foreign hands' solely because foreign hands had been averse to having them.

A second printed letter from Price appeared dated 19 December 1930, in which he regretted that the Society for Psychical Research had turned his offer down: 'I have failed in my endeavour to instil into the London Society for Psychical Research some new and active blood'. However, he was nothing if not persistent. The matter was raised again at the Annual General Meeting of the Society on 26 February 1931, that is, when Rudi had just begun his second long sojourn in Paris under Osty. Sir Oliver Lodge was in the Chair. Mrs. K. M. Goldney moved the resolution 'That this meeting approves of the amalgamation proposed by Mr. Harry Price and supported by an overwhelming majority of SPR voters of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research with this Society and requests the Council to appoint a committee to discuss the details of the suggested plan with the Administration of the National Laboratory'.<sup>61</sup>

Mrs. Goldney's mention of support by the overwhelming majority of members of the Society referred to a private census among members conducted by Mr. Price. There was, however, very strong feeling against Price among members of the Society's Council: his methods were said to be different from those of the Society, 'a certain amount of publicity was involved'—a delightful under-statement; the word 'National' was used for a privately managed enterprise; there had seemed to be 'impulsive haste' about the move; members had been privately circularised over the heads of the Council whilst the proposal was still *sub judice*; and members had been expected to vote without knowing the details and exact terms of the propositions. The Society, it was decided, must adhere to its traditional methods. After some discussion in which Lord Balfour, Mr. de Brath and Mr. Bousfield are on record as having taken part, it was decided that the motion be withdrawn and further detailed

<sup>61</sup> Report of the Annual General Meeting of the Society for Psychical Research, 26 February 1931, in *JSPR*, 27 (1931), 53–58.



proposals submitted to the Council. In short, the Council of the Society for Psychical Research, like the *Comité* of the *Institut Métapsychique*, did not favour a merger with Mr. Harry Price's National Laboratory of Psychical Research.

On 8 April 1932 Mr. Theodore Besterman asked for permission to sit with Rudi, and Price replied on 12 April that, as far as he was concerned, Besterman was welcome to attend Thursday seances,<sup>62</sup> but that Rudi had taken a dislike to Besterman, who should address his application to Rudi (HPL). This was probably a complete invention. Rudi was quite happy for Besterman or anyone else to be present, and he subsequently allowed Besterman to investigate him at length. What was Price's objection? As has been indicated, Besterman had meanwhile established extremely cordial relations with Osty whose work he greatly admired. This emerges with great clarity from the correspondence preserved at the *Institut Métapsychique*. On 13 April 1932 Besterman wrote to Osty: '... Although as you know I have not hesitated to express myself in very critical terms of parapsychical phenomena as such, I must acknowledge myself convinced. On the basis of your report I am fully persuaded of the genuineness of the phenomena you witnessed ...' (IMI).

Furthermore, Besterman had in print taken Osty's work seriously and damned Price's with faint praise. In the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* he had written a lengthy account of Rudi's mediumship to date, in which he stated that Price had extended Schrenck's electrical control to all sitters: '... unfortunately this method is very defective and deprives the seances ... of much though by no means all their value'.<sup>63</sup> This was indeed the unforgiveable sin: not only had he called the electrical control Schrenck's when Price set particular store upon being called its inventor, he had also dismissed it!

On 22 March 1932 C. C. L. Gregory and C. V. C. Herbert, who had completed the construction and testing of their infra-red apparatus in the workshop of the University of London Observatory, took it to a sitting at Harry Price's Laboratory. C. C. L. Gregory (my late husband) repeatedly told me how he and Herbert took the apparatus in Gregory's car that evening and that, so as not to leave the equipment unattended for a single minute, he watched over it and went without his supper. Neither Rudi nor Price knew what to expect, and the instrument registered occultations of the infra-red beam the first time it was used. I have asked the Earl of Powis for his recollections in this connection, and he writes:

18 August 1967

The infra-red apparatus was, as you say, made by Gregory and myself and taken by us—without any warning—to one of Price's seances where Rudi made it work the first time under what seemed fraud proof conditions. We could only reproduce the effect normally by blowing cigarette smoke into it—breathing into it had no reaction—and we could not see how Rudi could have produced any smoke in a completely dark room, especially as he had no reason to suppose that this—or indeed any—new apparatus had been used. ... of course he [Price] was no scientist; but in my view he was absolutely brilliant as a master of ceremonies at a physical seance. He had unbounded

<sup>62</sup> There were normally two sittings per week: those on Tuesdays were for Price's Council and for special sitters, and those on Thursdays for fee-paying sitters of lesser importance.

<sup>63</sup> T. Besterman (footnote 50), 432.

enthusiasm and was absolutely tireless—he would willingly go on all night. He certainly got far better results with Rudi than anyone else in this country.

Although C. C. L. Gregory's opinion concerning Price was somewhat more reserved—partly because he had, as he told me, on one occasion caught Price altering a temperature chart after a seance—both he and Herbert were absolutely convinced that something quite remarkable had happened in the seance of 22 March 1932 when their own apparatus had worked in registering infra-red absorptions, and I know that from this moment on Gregory took the investigation seriously. He had not really expected his apparatus to register anything; when it did, he felt satisfied that something wanted investigating.

Lord Charles Hope had, as we now know, been for some time trying to organise an investigation of Rudi independent of Price, indeed as far back as 1930. He mistrusted Price ever since the Borley incident, and felt profoundly uneasy at inducing a number of his scientific friends to commit themselves as to Rudi when any day some scandal might burst over Price's integrity and methods. When Hope realised that, as a result of the success of the infra-red experiments, Rudi stood a chance of being taken seriously by scientists in Britain, he became resolved that Rudi's future should not be inextricably bound up with the reputation of Harry Price, and he decided that an independent investigation was now absolutely essential.

It seems that Hope expected that the matter could be smoothed over without too much unpleasantness. He merely proposed that Rudi should be asked to come to England again, or remain in England, and be investigated by another committee, not at the National Laboratory and not under Price's direction. Price, however, was livid with rage, as emerges from the following letter (HPL) from Hope to Price:

April 12 1932

I have received your letter of April 8th. It is a little difficult for me to grasp your point of view. Surely you made it clear at the last Council meeting that you had no intention of prolonging Rudi's engagement with the National Laboratory after May 4th. I remember your saying it would be quite impossible to have him at the same time as the Polish medium. Also you yourself told me that Professor F. Harris had telephoned you about Rudi being engaged for May . . . so why you should consider yourself in any way hard used passes my comprehension. I am loth to attribute to you any 'dog in the manger' sentiments, but really you make it seem that way. I must also remind you that I myself paid the expenses incurred by Rudi's visit 1929-30 and have always done my best to help you with investigations of his powers and will be willing to do so again if he should come again later on.

Surely the important thing is to further psychical research and not to allow one's personal feelings to carry any weight. Surely, too, experiments with two mediums are likely to be more valuable than one, and you will be fully occupied with the Polish medium who, I hope, will prove a great success. It should be a matter of great satisfaction to you to feel that experiments with Rudi will continue at the same time. . . .

Price made it amply plain that it was not, so far as he was concerned, a matter of great satisfaction that Rudi should be examined by others. He replied (HPL):

April 16th 1932

I have received your letter and I am astonished at the attitude you take in the matter under discussion. The brutal facts of the case are that the very

people I am running the Lab. for have conspired in a miserable plot against me, and no amount of sophistry will alter them. Evelyn (probably hearing that I had discovered the plot) invited me to tea on Friday and was honest enough to make a clean breast of the whole affair.

Your remark that it would 'look bad' if Rudi is not tested elsewhere is ridiculous because he has just been to Paris for 15 months. But my sole complaint is that it was thought necessary to conspire against me to get a few more sittings with Rudi. It is like the host at a dinner party having his throat cut by his guests.

As regards Rudi, we can save ourselves further discussion in the matter, because he has had a letter from his friend in Vienna who offers to put him in charge of a branch he is opening in Braunau if the boy can take up the appointment during the next few weeks. Rudi is leaving London on May 6th.

From this point onwards Price was hardly on speaking terms with most of the other investigators. He regarded it as a personal affront and as a vote of no confidence that an attempt should be made to secure Rudi's services for a series of which he was not the moving spirit, and one must do him justice; it was, when all is said and done, a vote of no confidence. He must have realised that Hope no longer trusted him since the Borley incident; and Price also knew all about luring mediums from their investigators!

A more disciplined, a more dedicated or a less egocentric man than Price might have come to terms with the situation, however painful; he might have taken what credit there was to be had for launching Rudi on the English-speaking world and for extending Schrenck-Notzing's electrical control, turned his attention to other mediums, and waited whether Hope's next investigation would confirm his own and Osty's results. But Harry Price just did not have it in him thus to fade from the scene. He felt he had been betrayed and rejected and, with all the considerable vigour and resource at his disposal, he proceeded to behave like the bad fairy who had not been asked to the christening.

8.3. *Relations with members of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research.* There was a major quarrel at a Council meeting of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research on 26 April 1932.<sup>64</sup> Tempers rose very high; Price insulted Hope and Hope resigned from the Council. There ensued a ferocious correspondence between Price and Fraser-Harris in which Price came close to calling the latter a liar over the question of just who had mentioned what date and when, in connection with Rudi's departure. Price may have felt he had gone too far, and he wrote in a more conciliatory vein (HPL):

28 April 1932

... I am very sorry that you should have been drawn into this altercation at all. I have had trouble with Lord Charles Hope before. He insists upon 'bossing' things—but he will not 'boss' anything with which I am connected if I am paying the piper and am doing all the work like I have done for the last 10 years. I should never dream of trying to 'boss' another person's show, nor should I ever dream of doing such a mean, contemptible trick as a certain section of the Council apparently tried to play on me.

I am very fond of you and I think your personality is delightful. . . . Let us forget all about this wretched affair. . . .

<sup>64</sup> K. M. Goldney, personal communication; also letter from C. Hope to K. M. Goldney of 12 March 1933 (KMG).

The wretched affair, however, was not forgotten by anyone, and Fraser-Harris, not in the least mollified by being complimented on his delightful personality, replied in the most frigid terms (HPL):

3 May 1932

I have to thank you for your letter of April 28th . . . I cannot allow the expression 'conspiring against me to take away the boy from the Laboratory' to go unnoticed because that was what none of us contemplated doing. That was why I began 'arising out of the conversation at the Council Meeting, would you have any objection to some of us having sittings with Rudi after his contract is closed', etc., and in the meeting with him at the hotel we asked [Rudi] 'After your contract is closed at the Laboratory would you be willing . . .

All our plans related to the dates after May 4th. At the same time, I do not see that you can have any valid objections to my group of genuine investigators, who are prepared to remunerate R., having seances with him. For you to object to this might lead to the *gravest* misconceptions becoming current. You are right in thinking that I am deeply interested in the proceedings at the Laboratory and in gaining unique experiences. I also acknowledge once more your kindness in regard to my position on the Council. . . .

Price's reply to Professor Fraser-Harris is of some importance because of its date, 4 May 1932. The row at the Council of the National Laboratory had been on 26 April. Price's alleged secret 'unmasking' of Rudi by means of a double exposure took place on 28 April. Yet there is not a hint in the letter from Price to Fraser-Harris that there was anything amiss on 4 May, and on 5 May Fraser-Harris was asked to control Rudi without being given the faintest inkling that anything suspicious was supposed to have occurred. I quote from Price's letter (in HPL) to Fraser-Harris of 4 May:

The sting of the whole affair was that the very people for whom I run the Laboratory and who were, to all intents and purposes, my guests, should go and do something behind my back whether they were 'entitled' to do so or not. I regard it as the last word in ingratitude.

Your argument that the 'gravest misconception' might arise unless Lord Charles Hope tested the boy independently is knocked on the head by the fact that he has been in Paris for 15 months under Osty. Also he has been all over Europe by himself. Also I have purposely refrained from attending several seances [four out of twenty-seven] in order that other members of the Council, Lord Charles Hope, etc., could have the boy to themselves . . . I do not call Lord Charles Hope critical in the slightest . . . I reiterate that Lord Charles wants to 'boss' anything psychic with which he is connected and I know him much better than you do. . . .

We had a brilliant seance last night and Dr. William Brown (whose opinion is worth a dozen of those of Lord Charles Hope and his scientific friends) was very impressed. I understand that in tomorrow's *Daily Mail* there will be a statement of some sort concerning last night's experiment. . . .

The two important points to note are that Price at this point and on this date, that is *after* his alleged discovery of fraud by Rudi, represented Osty's experiments as validating his own, and that he similarly regarded the championship of Dr. William Brown as vindicating his own Third Series.

### 9. The Brown and Fraser-Harris *Times* correspondence

There cannot be any doubt that Dr. William Brown *was* deeply impressed, and that at Harry Price's prompting he overcame his very considerable

reluctance to commit himself in print by giving newspaper interviews and writing to the press. In particular, he wrote a letter to the *Times* referring to the sitting of 3 May at which the controllers were Capt. the Hon. V. Cochrane-Baillie and Mrs. Dorothy de Gernon. Dr. Brown's letter appeared in the *Times* of 7 May 1932 and ran as follows:

Sir, As a certain amount of publicity, unsolicited by me, has been accorded to a striking experience which I had last Tuesday night at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, I should like to give a brief record of my impressions in your journal while they are still fresh in my memory. A detailed record of every incident was made at the time by a shorthand writer, but that is another matter.

I was one of a circle of seven people at a seance with Rudi Schneider, the Austrian medium. We sat, holding hands, in front of a 'cabinet' or small recess curtained off by two heavy curtains, edged with luminous strips, with the medium to the side, about 2 ft. from the left-hand curtain and fully controlled as to his hands, feet and head by one of the sitters. A shaded red lamp hung in front of the curtains and on the floor in front of them, illuminated by the red rays, was a small table with a detachable top on which was placed a knotted handkerchief. A luminous wastepaper basket was also nearby. Inside the cabinet, on the floor, were vases containing different kinds of flowers—daffodils, anemones, etc. I searched the cabinet carefully and found nothing else there. Then the room plunged into darkness, apart from the red light, and Rudi went into trance characterised by rapid breathing which was kept up over long periods of time. His trance personality 'Olga' appeared and spoke in whispered German.

Later the curtains began to shake and billow out as if blown by a breeze and we had a feeling of cold. After some experiences with the basket which 'Olga' directed me to place on my knees and to hold near the curtain, and which was moved and tugged by some unseen agency, sounds of movement seemed to come from the small table and a loud bang was heard in a far corner of the room. Subsequently, on turning up the light, we found that the detachable top had been hurled over our heads into that corner, and that the knotted handkerchief had been transported over our heads into the opposite corner of the room.

Then a mass of flowers suddenly emerged from the curtains at a level of about 4 ft. from the floor and fell under the red lamp. They had been caught up from the vases in the cabinet by some unseen agency. Mr. Harry Price, the director of the Laboratory, who was sitting immediately in front of the shaded red light, was asked by 'Olga' to hold a flower by its head, with the stalk pointing towards the curtains, under the red light. It then disappeared towards the cabinet. I was asked to do the same with another flower. I felt an impact at the end of the stalk and then the flower was drawn from me into the darkness. These were the outstanding events of the sitting. I could find no evidence of fraud or trickery, and while retaining an alert and critical attitude of mind throughout, had a strong feeling of some mysterious power working from within the cabinet, a power for which I could imagine no mechanical or pneumatic contrivance as a cause—at least such as would be possible under the conditions of the seance.

I have had sittings with other 'physical' mediums, and in no case have I received the impression of genuineness in their manifestations such as I had with Rudi last Tuesday night. Undoubtedly the phenomena are worthy of the closest scientific investigation.

I am, etc.,

William Brown

Oxford

Professor Fraser-Harris decided to support Dr. William Brown, and within a couple of days also wrote to the Editor of the *Times*:

May 9 1932

Sir, As a certain amount of wholly unsolicited publicity has been accorded to myself as well as to Dr. William Brown, in connection with the recent investigation in the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, S.W.7, I should like to be allowed to corroborate Dr. Brown's impressions and to add a few of my own.

Through the courtesy of the Director, Mr. Harry Price, I was invited to join a number of persons in the scientific investigation of the alleged paranormal powers of the Austrian medium, Rudi Schneider, who left London yesterday after a visit of three months. This young man specializes, if one may so say, in 'telekinesis', or the raising of solid objects from their places and the transporting of them elsewhere without the intervention of any human or other obvious agency. At an early date we satisfied ourselves of the genuineness of these phenomena—that is to say that this medium (and only when in trance) is possessed of some paranormal capacity or power to effect physical displacement of ordinary, but in some cases quite heavy, objects.

The explanation (if there is one) of these things is another and extremely difficult matter; nor is this the time to discuss it. I merely wish to say that I and my wife have on several occasions seen phenomena quite as remarkable as those testified to by Dr. Brown. Some of these have been—a four-legged table lifted up and thrown forward so violently that two of its legs were smashed off; a basket tugged out of my hand; a closed cigarette case pulled from an experimenter's hand and later flung open inside a large chest closed with a heavy lid; a cigarette floating through the air and then forced between my fingers. I have furthermore been touched on the right thumb under a red light by a white, diaphanous, rod-like homogeneous structure that felt cool and moist, a so-called 'pseudopod' or 'phantom'.

Out of 27 seances 18 have been blank,<sup>65</sup> not at all what one would expect of a fraudulent person. As Dr. Brown said, here indeed is material for further research, for at present we are very far from framing any satisfactory explanation or adequate theory. May I be permitted to say in the clearest manner possible that I am not a 'spiritualist'?

Yours, etc.,

D. Fraser-Harris

The Athenaeum May 7

To say that Harry Price was pleased by these two letters to the *Times* would be an understatement. As Mrs. Goldney wrote in a contemporary note, he was 'absolutely DELIGHTED'; he was indeed jubilant and triumphant and made no secret of his joy. When Professor N. Ach wrote to Price asking him whether he might make arrangements to investigate Rudi in Göttingen in September or October rather than June or July (as Price had apparently suggested) Price replied (HPL):

10 May 1932

... Rudi gave a few brilliant sittings during the last three months and has at last convinced Dr. William Brown, F.R.C.P., the distinguished psychologist, and Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy at Oxford, that his phenomena are absolutely genuine. Dr. Brown declared his conviction in a most important interview published in the *Daily Mail* (enclosed) last week and also in a letter to the *Times* (enclosed). Last week saw the commencement of a new epoch in psychical research. . . .

He wrote in a similar vein to others, including Vater Schneider (HPL):

10 May 1932

... Rudi has absolutely convinced Dr. William Brown, the eminent psychologist—and this marks a new epoch in British Psychical Research. Rudi is

<sup>65</sup> Actually, not quite that number were totally negative, according to Price's *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

returning to the Laboratory in September and I am hoping to carry out some experiments in Oxford University. Several people are trying to get Rudi to London (including SPR people) but I have warned him it would be dangerous for the Laboratory, as there are several who are only too anxious to set a trap for him into which he might unknowingly fall. It is just possible that some of us may be in Braunau during the summer. . . .

Vater Schneider's reply was touching: he could not 'find words to express how delighted' he would be if Price were to come to Braunau, and added some friendly lines from Rudi and Mitzi.

Things had meanwhile not gone at all smoothly for Dr. William Brown. He was subjected to a good deal of ridicule at Oxford, notably by Professors Einstein and Lindemann (later Lord Cherwell), who simply laughed at the notion of physical phenomena. As Lord Charles Hope wrote to C. C. L. Gregory on 13 May 1932:

. . . I too think there is almost no doubt that Rudi can produce genuine paranormal phenomena. It is a great pity we could not have the proposed sittings, but I still hope it can be managed later on. You have, perhaps, seen Dr. William Brown's and Fraser-Harris's letters which appeared in the *Times* last week. I enclose the cuttings in case you did not. Will you please return them. Dr. Brown was very displeased at being 'starred' in the *Daily Mail* front page. I was sorry too but did not feel responsible, as for his series he went to Price's at P's invitation and not at mine.

Dr. Brown has since then been having rather a time of it at Oxford being laughed at by Lindemann and even Einstein among others. Of course they will not even hear of such phenomena being genuine. . . .<sup>66</sup>

On 10 May Brown wrote to Price (HPL): 'I am rather sorry you referred to me so much (though I realise it was kindly meant) in the *Empire News* . . . and especially as you put the F.R.C.P. after my name—I fear the publicity, i.e. D.M. [Doctor of Medicine] too, will be a great hardship to me with doctors and scientists . . .'; but he was pleading in vain.

In fact Dr. Brown, in writing to the *Times* and by implication associating himself with Harry Price, had laid himself open to a good deal of merriment. Had Dr. Brown and his scientific colleagues stooped so far as to read the more sensationalist reports in the press during the first six months of 1932, they would have come across some very choice publicity concerning the doings of Harry Price in connection with a solemn *Walpurgisnacht* rite of black magic to be performed at midnight on the Brocken mountain in Germany, the object of which was to disprove the alleged superstition that, with suitable incantations and the intervention of a virgin, a goat would turn into a handsome young man. For example, the *Evening News* of 18 April 1932 (the date between the 22nd and the 23rd of Rudi's London seances) carried an article about a German official who was arranging a solemn black magic test at the top of the Brocken at the full moon and who had just arrived in London, doubtless to complete arrangements with the chief moving spirit of the enterprise, none other than Mr. Harry Price. 'He took a grave risk. Cockney humour is not very kind to professors [Price] who believe that an anointed he-goat, led by a maiden "pure in heart" will change to a "fair youth of surpassing beauty". But

<sup>66</sup> C. Hope to C. C. L. Gregory, 13 May 1932, in C. C. L. Gregory, 'Rudi Schneider—recollections and comments', *JSPR*, 39 (1958), 209–214.

perhaps a professor who leads goats by a silken cord up a mountainside in the light of the moon is proof even against Cockney humour'. The German press was even more scathing, and their special target too was the English savant, Herr Harry Price, who was purporting to take this affair with perfect solemnity. On 20 April 1932 the *Neue Berliner Zeitung*, in referring to the repeated delays of the Brocken celebrations, said in so many words that it seemed that the organisers were manifestly less concerned with celebrations of any sort than with a sensational spectacle that would doubtless be exploited accordingly.

The festivities eventually took place on 17 June and were duly described in *The Listener* for 6 July 1932 by Price himself, where he explained how, accompanied by 42 press photographers, 73 pressmen and a cinematographic set-up, he demonstrated to everyone's entire satisfaction that 'the ancient magic ritual' did not work; despite a mystic circle accurately designed in a mosaic that had been laid down near the granite altar, despite the scrupulous observance of the venerable ritual, despite the appearance of a maiden pure in heart in the person of Miss Urta Bohn and the use of a white kid specially chosen at birth, the goat remained a goat. Price concluded: 'The scoffers [who, one wonders?] will tell us that because we had no faith the experiment was not conclusive; in other words that the magic formula will not work automatically. That is all very well but what sort of state do we have to induce in order that the magical metamorphosis shall take place?'

This of course was weeks later than Dr. William Brown's first letter to the *Times*. But we do know that there was a great amount of uproarious advance publicity in the press over Mr. Price's proposed magical 'experiment' on the Brocken especially, as I have mentioned, in the German press. This publicity had evidently not reached Brown and Fraser-Harris; but I think it entirely possible that it had indeed come to the attention of Professors Einstein and Lindemann, whose native tongue was German. Just as Brown and Fraser-Harris were committing themselves to Rudi's mediumship in the *Times*, Mr. Price's Brocken stunt was receiving a climax of notoriety in the popular press.

Whether this *Walpurgisnacht*-mongering on Price's part was forcibly drawn to Dr. Brown's attention by Einstein or Lindemann, or whether Hope had a heart to heart talk with Brown on the subject of the desirability of conducting an independent investigation of Rudi, Dr. Brown wrote a second letter to the *Times* which was published on 14 May:

Sir, In my letter of last Saturday I endeavoured to give a concise, accurate account of a 'successful' seance with the young Austrian medium Rudi Schneider, at which I was present on Tuesday night, May 3rd. I briefly described the chief events that occurred and also my own mental reaction to them. At the time I had a feeling of conviction that the phenomena could not be accounted for in ordinary terms—in other words that they were supernatural. But intellectual conviction comes, if at all, only after reflection upon all the relevant circumstances, and this involves in its scope a very wide circle of facts both physical and psychological. Direct observation free from any inaccuracy may point imperiously in one direction and yet a full consideration of all the circumstances may indicate a very different interpretation. In psychical research, as in the investigation of crime, circumstantial evidence is of supreme importance.

My experiences are paralleled by those of Dr. D. Fraser-Harris and of all the other sitters (a large number) who were present at one or another of the



more successful seances, and I understand that their conviction of the genuineness of the phenomena was at least as strong as mine. Moreover, at the *Institut Métapsychique* in Paris the Director, Dr. Eugène Osty, held a large number of seances with Rudi last year, using infra-red rays and elaborate photo-electric receiving apparatus whereby he seems to have demonstrated absorption of such rays to the extent of 30 per cent and more by action at a distance under trance conditions. These interesting researches are described in *Les pouvoirs inconnus de l'esprit sur la matière* (Libraire Felix Alcan 1932). Similar results with infra-red rays have been obtained in one or two sittings here in London with less elaborate apparatus.

Nevertheless one is not relieved from the necessity of the closest scrutiny of all the circumstances of these researches, and during the past week my mind has hardly ceased from an active review of every conceivable aspect of the problem. The human element must be closely considered, the temperament, situation and motives of every person concerned, both here and abroad, so far as it is at all possible to discover them. The order of events, the conditions of the seance, certain observations which seemed insignificant at the time but which may prove important in the light of later events—these and many other considerations must play their part in helping one to come to a final verdict.

In the light of such considerations as these I am still unable to dispute the genuineness of the phenomena that I experienced. On the other hand extensive *lacunae* in my knowledge of this wider circle of facts prevent me from going sponsor for the phenomena in spite of their immediate impressiveness. Intellectual conviction can only come, if at all, after much more stringent scientific investigation carried out in a university laboratory or in the seance room of the S.P.R. with trained scientists and psychical researchers as sitters. In saying all this I am not depreciating the very important preliminary work that has already been done both here in England and on the Continent, but I am emphasizing the need of confirmatory evidence and of systematic verification. Further knowledge is required of the exact physiological and psychological nature of Rudi's trance state or so-called trance personality 'Olga'—whether genuine or spurious. An outstanding difficulty in this kind of research, distinguishing it from ordinary scientific research, is that one has to adapt oneself to the whims and preconceptions of the medium on pain of getting no 'phenomena'. One cannot dictate the conditions of the investigation, but has to submit to dictation from him or from his trance personality. Therefore indirect and hidden control of the investigation needs to be exceptionally stringent and far-seeing.

Whether genuine or spurious, Rudi Schneider's trance manifestations are worthy of the closest scientific study and will repay such study. I am, etc.

Oxford May 11

William Brown

Price was, to put it mildly, furious. He immediately wrote a very long letter to Brown, protesting against the latter's second *Times* letter:

May 14 1932

... When I opened the *Times* ... my appetite vanished! My first reaction was how Salter, Lord Charles Hope and the rest of the S.P.R. people (mad with jealousy at the success of the Laboratory) will chuckle at your reference to them. ... The sting of your letter ... is the fact that you say that seances at the S.P.R. would be convincing and, by implication, those at the Laboratory are open to suspicion. I think it a most unmerited slur on the Laboratory, and, being published in the *Times*, we shall be the laughing stock of the kingdom. ... the S.P.R. is thoroughly incompetent ... and a joke ... living on its traditions. As for the seance room, I should imagine that it is the worst equipped in existence.

Conversely, the only research work worthy of the name during the past 10 years has been done by the Laboratory. ...

I hope that Osty does not see your letter. He and his Sorbonne collaborators are, I am sure, under the impression that they have carried out a most 'stringent scientific investigation' . . . .

*I do not propose to publish any report of our last series of sittings with Rudi.* It would cost £120 and would be a sheer waste of money after your remarks.

There is one statement in your letter which is incorrect. You mention the 'whims and preconceptions of the medium' and state that one 'has to submit to dictation from him'. This is not true. *Never once has Rudi 'dictated' or even suggested* (except on one occasion when he thought a black cloth on the floor would show up the 'pseudopods' better). *Conversely he has never questioned any control or experiment and has cheerfully obeyed every order. Osty mentioned this same compliance on the part of Rudi in a letter to me a few weeks ago. Certainly 'Olga' dictates. . . .*

. . . I expect you will say that I have misinterpreted your letter but as I . . . read it, its effect is to whitewash the S.P.R. at the expense of the National Laboratory. . . .<sup>67</sup>

Dr. Brown's reply was brief and rather distant. In referring to the 'seance rooms of the S.P.R.' he was not advocating research under S.P.R. auspices but merely naming one neutral place among others: 'Rudi's phenomena if they prove what they seem to prove are of such transcendent importance that verification under the most stringent conditions on independent ground, both of seance room and of sitters, is imperative—if the scientific world is to be convinced—and I have merely stated the minimum conditions for this. No possible disparagement of your lab. or Osty's or anyone else's is suggested in the faintest degree . . .' (HPL).

Price lost no time in contacting Osty and promptly sent him Brown's second letter to the *Times* (which he had just piously hoped Osty would never see) with the comment: 'He is not very complimentary to your Paris experiments and regards them as being merely "preliminary" work to that which ought to be done in England . . .', adding that Brown was trying to ingratiate himself with the S.P.R. as he hoped to be that Society's next President (IMI). Osty reacted by asking Lord Charles Hope what Brown had against himself and Hope replied on 30 May 1932: 'It is not true that Dr. Brown is going to be the President of the SPR next year and it is not true that he has a poor opinion of your experiments' (IMI).

Price also now started a string of letters (in HPL) to Vater Schneider warning him most urgently against sending Rudi to the S.P.R.:

27 May 1932

. . . it would be absolute madness for Rudi to go to this Society . . . I am very grateful, dear Vater Schneider, for all your kind words concerning our Laboratory, our methods and myself. We have always had particularly good successes with Rudi and have without doubt had far better results than Dr. Osty ever succeeded in obtaining in Paris. . . . Dr. William Brown wrote to the *Times* that he would have been more convinced if he had seen the phenomena in the seance room of the S.P.R. He hopes to become the President of the S.P.R. next year; and this explains his great interest in that Society. . . .

There is also a letter to Rudi marked 'personal and strictly confidential' (*privat und streng vertraulich*) dated 27 May 1932 (HPL), containing a solemn warning against having anything whatever to do with either the SPR or with

<sup>67</sup> In HPL. All italics in this passage are added by me.

Dr. William Brown: 'You will regret it all your life'—a thinly veiled threat.

In June *Nature* published an unsigned review of Osty's work with Rudi, which was a somewhat oblique attack; as Lord Charles Hope put it in a letter to Osty (IMI):

1 July 1932

... you will notice that the review, which is unsigned, attacks Rudi's early reputation and not actually your report. I think that is, in a way, a compliment to your report. . . .

There are several scientists who regret the tone of this review in *Nature* and consider it unfair but you will understand it is very difficult to start a controversy in that journal without referring to sittings held by Mr. Price and unfortunately Mr. Price has not improved his position in scientific circles by his journey to the Brocken.

As I have already told you, satisfactory results were obtained in London with the infra-red apparatus completely covered in a gauze box and this experiment was repeated on several occasions. The gauze box (and apparatus complete) was made by two friends of mine, one of whom is a scientist, and was brought in one evening just before a 'sitting'. It was successfully worked by 'Olga-Rudi' which has duly impressed most people who have heard of the experiment and unfortunately it would be difficult for several reasons for the scientist in question to write to *Nature* on this subject. . . .

The scientist in question was C. C. L. Gregory, and his major reason for not wishing to commit himself in *Nature* was a feeling of uneasiness about the reliability of Harry Price. Price, on the other hand, wrote a long and indignant letter (in HPL) to the Editor of *Nature*:

27 July 1932

... It is absolutely untrue that the scientists whom I invited 'were merely privileged spectators of phenomena produced under conditions over which they had little control and in circumstances where accuracy of observation was almost impossible'. The very best phenomena, including those indicated by the infra-red installation, were witnessed when the seances were under the sole control of Professor D. F. Fraser-Harris and Mr. C. J. Gregory [*sic*] (of the Mill Hill Observatory) and remained under their care and direction *at every seance at which it was used*. . . .

... It is utterly false to state that the gentleman named had been 'invited' to witness phenomena. They were *responsible* for the conditions under which the phenomena were witnessed and for the control of the medium. . . .

It does not seem to have occurred to Price that the scientists were entitled to decide for themselves under just what conditions they were willing to be held responsible for the results of the investigations. The Editor of *Nature*, Sir Richard Gregory, declined to publish the letter and returned it. Had he retained it, he might have been wryly amused to compare it with another letter which he was to receive from Mr. Price about a year later, making a completely conflicting set of assertions about the same set of events.

The point raised by Price as to the status of the sitters is an interesting and important one. In one sense it was quite true that sitters were given an opportunity to control the medium and to satisfy themselves as to conditions and, in the case of the infra-red apparatus, to introduce their own equipment into the room. On the other hand, Price never tired of pointing out to them that they were his 'guests', they were enjoying his hospitality, were indebted to him for unique experiences, and were under an obligation to him to confine

their activities as regards the medium within strictly delimited bounds. He absolutely declined to allow them to investigate the medium separately from himself, although it is true that he had, as he stressed over and over again, absented himself on a few isolated occasions at his own discretion so that they had the medium to themselves in his Laboratory: his absences were without warning, and on his own terms. Also, he interfered with and dismantled apparatus without consulting or informing anyone.

The next development was a lengthy and heated exchange of letters between Price and Dr. William Brown centering around the question whether Brown had or had not 'solicited' the publicity that accrued from his letter to the *Times* and various interviews he had given to the Press. Price's chief arguments were that Brown had actually rung up the *Daily Mail* and had been heard to observe that he would not have missed the seance with Rudi of 3 May for £1000. Brown maintained on 10 September that he never took the initiative but had merely, out of gratitude to Price, offered to add his testimony to that of Price: 'I fear you have a complex about the S.P.R.', wrote Brown, not perhaps unreasonably (HPL). Price's reaction was an immensely long letter, five pages of single-spaced typing dated 20 September 1932, entirely devoted to an attempt to prove that Brown had in fact 'solicited' publicity at various times.

Price's determination to prove that Brown was seeking press publicity was perhaps largely due to the fact that Price's own penchant for such publicity was being used as an argument why he should be excluded from the next investigation of Rudi. One cannot help feeling also that Price must have derived much joy from taxing Dr. Brown of all people with avidity for notoriety. Brown emerges from his letters as peculiarly conscious of his medical dignity and fearful of academic sneers, and had actually begged Price, for instance on 10 May 1932, to go easy on press publicity in hand-written letters, copies of which Dr. Brown himself had evidently not kept (HPL).

What seems to have happened is that Dr. Brown was indeed carried away after the seance of 3 May 1932 which had led him to write to the *Times*. However, I have no doubt whatever that the idea of ringing up the *Daily Mail* in the middle of the night from Price's Laboratory after that seance came from Price and not from Brown: the *Daily Mail* was the paper of Sutton, Price's old enemy who, he knew perfectly well, harboured against him the darkest suspicions as regards Borley rectory, and it was the *Daily Mail* that had hinted that officers of the National Laboratory might have faked Rudi's phenomena.<sup>68</sup>

Dr. Brown, in his admitted initial state of excitement at a major scientific change of heart, was doubtless quite ready to fall in with Price's suggestion to ring up the *Daily Mail* to testify to his belief that he had observed genuine paranormal phenomena. Unlike Brown, Price was perfectly aware of that most reliable of all parapsychological phenomena, the inconstancy of conviction, and it was important for him to get Brown to commit himself as rapidly as possible, to strike while the iron was hot. Brown rose to the bait—only to escape by adding a cautionary footnote to his initial enthusiasm. The more furious Price became with Brown for second thoughts and hedging, the more

<sup>68</sup> R. Lambert to H. Price, 10 May 1932, letter in HPL.

certain Brown grew that second thoughts and hedging were justified and that Price would not be a suitable colleague for a future collaboration; and the more cautious and reserved Brown became, the angrier Price grew . . . and so on, until the two men reached a veritable crescendo of mutual detestation.

### 10. Price's campaign against Eugène Osty

On 25 May 1932 Lord Charles Hope had approached Osty and asked him to give the Myers Memorial Lecture to the Society for Psychical Research the following year. At the same time he offered him £150 for completing his Rudi investigation. These negotiations eventually came to nothing because Rudi's powers had waned to such an extent that experiments in Paris were abandoned. However, Osty did give the Myers Memorial Lecture in 1933, 'The supernormal aspects of energy and matter',<sup>69</sup> and his cordial relations with the Society for Psychical Research cannot have been a secret from Harry Price.

In the summer of 1932 the first whisperings against Osty began. C. W. Olliver, author of 'L'extension de la conscience', wrote an undated letter to Professor Charles Richet (who had contributed a preface to this book) saying that he had heard rumours in London against Osty's experiments with Rudi Schneider and in particular concerning the presence of a possible accomplice which had not been mentioned in the report. Richet forwarded the letter (in IMI) to Osty. Osty wrote a long and detailed reply, dated 23 September 1932 (IMI). All accusations against his work, Osty said, emanated from one source, Mr. Harry Price, and were twofold: (1) that witnesses were not given by name; and (2) that an accomplice ('une complice'—feminine) was present at sittings who had not been mentioned in Osty's report. As regards (1), Osty said he had deliberately not cited witnesses as he wished to break with the method of witnessed sittings since in his view this prevented parapsychology from becoming a proper science. The rest of the letter is concerned with (2).

Altogether, Osty writes, he had over 90 sittings with Rudi. During the 14th of these, on 19 November 1930, he first observed occultations of the infra-red. On 19 May 1931, at the 51st seance, '*our experiments having already yielded everything we have published*', Miss Mitzi Mängl, Rudi's fiancée, a young girl of 18 who had arrived two days previously, attended a seance for the first time. Rudi was exhausted and was about to return to Braunau for a rest; his fiancée was invited out of politeness to Rudi. Her presence was entirely harmless in the given control conditions and coincided with a series of seances that were at first virtually and then wholly negative. From 27 May to 8 July not even the feeblest absorption of the infra-red was registered, and this was the very last sitting when Rudi was due to return:

It happened at this sitting the 62nd, that a sitter in the first row said he had been touched on the knee as if by a hand, a thing which had never happened before. Rudi in trance, who was asked what this meant, answered [speaking as 'Olga'] that the phenomenon had nothing to do with him.

A moment later my secretary, who was sitting next to me, near the instrument cupboard where I was watching the galvanometric spots, felt a hand touching her knee. It was Miss Mängl's hand. Miss Mängl was sitting between us, behind some of the other sitters, and it would have been a physical

<sup>69</sup> E. Osty, *Supernormal aspects of energy and matter* (Frederic W. H. Myers Memorial Lecture; 1933, London: Society for Psychical Research).

impossibility for her to get to the scene of action of the mediumistic force where, besides, she would immediately have released a photograph of her presence, if she had got that far—through the first row of sitters and the veil separating these from the apparatus; and this without mentioning the total occultations which I should have observed at the galvanometer spots. . . .

We discussed the incident after the seance. It was not totally certain that Miss Mängl had wished to simulate phenomena, and it was in any case unimportant since we only took note of what happened in the part of the room that was inaccessible [*inviolable*]. But we were irritated by the idea that there might have been some naive idea to make us believe in a mediumistic phenomenon.

We thought perhaps the young girl might have had the wish to prolong her stay in Paris and, seeing her fiancée was exhausted, might have had the idea of making those present believe in a phenomenon in order to encourage us to continue seances. In our state of ignorance we decided not to say anything to Rudi so as not to endanger the affection he felt for the young girl.

There were four more sittings during which Miss Mängl was severely watched. Then she left Paris with her fiancé on July 17th.

This is the story of the 'accomplice' if one can call it that.

I have not mentioned the incident because it was entirely irrelevant to our results . . . Rudi returned, alone as we had wished, in October 1931. We had another 24 sittings until and including December during which we attempted to verify precisely the principal results which we had previously made, especially as regards the synchronisation of the oscillations with Rudi's respiration.

Before, during and after the brief interlude of his fiancée, Rudi produced identical phenomena, absolutely incapable of simulation in the conditions in which the experiments were conducted. . . .

Knowing that Mr. Price did not have at his disposal serious control devices, I thought it my duty to write to him letters, copies of which I enclose. . . .

Osty added copies of his letters of 15 and 22 January, which contain the sentence: 'when there are no phenomena she tries to produce some and does so' (IMI). He continued:

And what has Mr. Harry Price done with my confidential communication, designed to safeguard Rudi's self-respect and to ensure that he should not refuse to be further investigated? Mr. Harry Price invited Mlle Mängl to come to London with her fiancé. He let her assist at every seance in his laboratory entirely devoid of serious control precautions. He said nothing whatever of this information to any of his co-investigators (my communication was confidential only as regards Rudi). And then he goes and plays about with my confidential letters in order to get people to believe that Miss Mängl has been present at all our sittings and that she has produced *the very phenomena* we were investigating. . . .

Osty was distinctly displeased. He continued about Price's 'satanic behaviour' and obvious determination to bring about the moral ruin of his, Osty's work.

Thus Price had indeed performed a complete *volte face*: instead of treating Osty's work as corroborating his own and rendering superfluous another investigation (as he had done over and over again in May, June and July 1932 in order to persuade all concerned that there was not the slightest need for a fresh investigation) he now, from August 1932 onwards, took the line that Osty's work was totally worthless because he had suppressed the presence at seances of an accomplice. From the sequence of letters it is entirely clear that this change of tactics occurred immediately Price realised that he had

failed to persuade Osty to have nothing to do with the Society for Psychical Research.

One can imagine Osty's feelings readily enough—Price had indeed put his friendly warning to monstrous use. Worse still, Price, knowing what he did, had allowed Mitzi to be present at every single one of the Third Series of sittings in London! As every investigator before Price has confirmed, and as Price had assured every critic over and over again who accused him of letting the medium dictate to him, Rudi never made any conditions whatever as regards sittings.<sup>70</sup> But Price had letters in his possession in which Rudi had refused to come to *London* without Mitzi, and it was quite easy to convey a very unfavourable interpretation of this refusal by omitting the relevant circumstances.

Moreover, Osty's warning had been kept from his co-investigators who—or so at least Price had assured the Editor of *Nature* when it suited him—were fully as responsible as he himself for the control conditions and conduct of experiments. Indeed, Price was much nearer the mark when he treated his sitters as guests, occasionally privileged to make certain tests at his own discretion. If Osty's work was not 'worth the paper it was written on', as Price was to put it later, because of the presence of an unacknowledged accomplice, what of his own Third Series, at which this subject of suspicion was present at every sitting? But Price, in his passionate hatred for his enemies, was willing to sacrifice his own sittings, provided this would bring to nought his rivals' efforts also.

Osty, then, had indeed reason for annoyance. But there is perhaps room for a third point of view. From Osty's own account as given to M. Olliver, there really was no case against Mitzi. There were perhaps some slight grounds for suspicion, but nothing had taken place which entitled Osty to write 'when there are no phenomena she tries to produce some and does so'. At most he might have been justified in uttering a word of caution. Price's conduct in allowing Mitzi to attend all sittings and in keeping the information from his fellow researchers is impossible to defend. But what right had Osty to blacken Mitzi's character in so uncompromising a manner on virtually no evidence at a time when he no longer entertained any regard for Price's judgment or probity on account of the Duncan 'teleplasm' affair?

We know from numerous accounts of other sittings in Braunau, in Munich, in London and elsewhere that sensations of being touched by a hand were indeed quite common phenomena at Rudi seances, and were not always readily explicable by a handy accomplice; and we also know that at least on some occasions another part-personality, 'Anton', said he was responsible for these sensations when 'Olga' was ostensibly not there.<sup>71</sup> It may therefore well be that during the Paris sittings some phenomena took place which were new to that setting.

Osty's letter to Price about Mitzi shows up a very important difficulty that has always haunted psychical research. There is a natural tendency for an investigator to consider himself as being somehow in a different and superior class from that of the medium, and as therefore being under no obligation to display towards the medium or his friends the same standard of conduct by

<sup>70</sup> For example, H. Price to W. Brown, 14 May 1932 (HPL).

<sup>71</sup> A. von Schrenck-Notzing (footnote 7), 136–137.

which he might feel bound towards his other fellow human beings. (Psychical researchers tend, equally naturally, to forget that once they become convinced of the reality of a medium's phenomena, so far as the outside world is concerned, they themselves, the investigators, are classed along with the medium.) So Osty thought of Price as a colleague, and as such in a privileged position *vis-à-vis* the medium and his fiancée. It probably never occurred to him that there was anything improper or unjust about making a categorical accusation of fraud against a young girl on virtually no evidence—and that to Price of all people, who had just published an article on 'teleplasm' which, the latter now asserted, was a hoax designed to lure another medium, Mrs. Helen Duncan, to confide in him! Certainly Osty paid very dearly for his rash accusation, even though he immediately reassured Price that Rudi had never occasioned the slightest suspicion.

#### 11. Price's policy towards members of the National Laboratory between 28 April 1932 and 5 March 1933

The rumours concerning Osty's work began to circulate in August 1932. The double-exposure photograph, on the other hand, seems to have been kept a tight secret right through until Price was ready to publish his denunciation of Rudi in March 1933. There is a letter from Professor Fraser-Harris to Price dated 12 July 1932 (in HPL) mentioning some photographs, from which it seems quite clear that no suspicion had crossed Fraser-Harris's mind that Price might turn his championship of Rudi into hostility:

Don't you think it would be a good thing if some of us met and discussed the photographs taken during the recent sittings? I, for one, have never studied them, and only glanced at them in artificial light casually before one or two sittings. Certain appearances are in need of interpretation and I think there ought to be a 'round table conference' (as fashionable nowadays) to come to some conclusion about what the photographs show. Something of this sort is necessary before they are incorporated in any report of the sittings. . . .

Fraser-Harris went on to discuss some points arising out of the anonymous review in *Nature*. He reassured Price that he himself had written to the Editor of that journal to the effect that the phenomena were worthy of the notice of 'official science'; however, he reproached Price for not having let him know earlier that there had been any previous controversy about the genuineness of the Schneiders, as there had been in *Nature* some allusion to previous attacks, notably Vinton's.

Price replied curtly and by return of post (HPL):

13 July 1932

. . . Yes, do come along and examine the Rudi photographs. There are only fairly rough prints of them but they are quite clear. I doubt whether it would be of any use having a conference about the pictures, as they are here for anyone who cares to examine them.

There has not been a shred of evidence published that Rudi ever cheated. The two cases cited in *Nature* were, I think, merely theories or general assumptions. The same with Vinton's article. . . .

This is certainly not the kind of letter one might have expected from a man who had, as he subsequently alleged, obtained during the previous May incontestable photographic evidence that Rudi had cheated during a seance,



and who was persuaded that all Rudi's phenomena during the Third Series should be dismissed as suspect! Fraser-Harris does not seem to have pursued the matter. Apparently Price let it be supposed that he would never publish a report of the Third Series,<sup>72</sup> and no one was ever allowed during his lifetime to see his negatives. The tenor of Price's letter, especially the sentence 'there has not been a shred of evidence published that Rudi ever cheated', must have confirmed Fraser-Harris in the impression that Price was vouching for Rudi's phenomena and for his complete integrity, and that he was sulking because the scientists wanted an independent check.

A further incident must have completely misled the world of psychical research as regards Price's eventual line of action. Professor Nils von Hofsten, who had been present at two of Price's 1929 sittings, wrote to Price on 9 May 1932 (HPL):

During my visit to London in January 1930 I wrote a report of my two sittings with Rudi Schneider. You know that I felt very sceptical already after the first sitting. I should have liked some further experiments but Rudi Schneider did not return to London until recently, perhaps, other duties and interests filled my time and my notes remained in a drawer. Finally I took them out and wrote them in English with a few additions. I didn't know where to publish such a non-believing account, but sent it at last to America. Now I have been told that it will be published very soon. I wish to inform you; I prefer that you would know it from me. . . .

In point of fact, Professor von Hofsten (like Price himself after the 25th seance, on 28 April) had at the time given no indication whatsoever of his scepticism. Furthermore, he had written a letter dated 16 October 1931 to Rudi in which he said that he found Rudi employing quite normal means and had proof; he offered Rudi to go easy on him if he would own up as to just how he performed his tricks (HPL). Rudi had sent the letter to Price in London. Price had taken no cognisance of von Hofsten's letter to Rudi, but he did reply to that of 9 May 1932 in a long and quite furious epistle (in HPL) which makes ironic reading, knowing what we do about Price's own subsequent conduct:

May 12th 1932

. . . I am astounded that you should wait two and a half years before launching an attack on Rudi Schneider. Why did you not say you were dissatisfied during or after the seances? You reiterated to me that you were very much impressed and said something similar to me in your letter of January 22nd 1930. During the seances themselves you were *enthusiastic* about the phenomena and among other exclamations (as recorded in our official protocol) you remarked during the phenomena 'aber Olga, es ist undenkbar; es ist wunderschön: ich bin overwhelmed as you say in English'. . . . What did you mean by all that enthusiasm if you were not impressed?

Do you seriously think that your opinion, voiced after a lapse of two and a half years, will have the slightest weight with scientists anywhere in the world, after Dr. Osty's 15 months of experimenting with Rudi in Paris, and our own three series of very carefully planned experiments? Your opinion will not be worth the paper it is written on. . . .

Do you seriously consider that anyone will believe that you had 'proofs' of Rudi's 'fraud' and kept silent for two and a half years without saying a word about it? . . .

. . . Do you not think it a terrible thing for you to *pretend* that you have found out something about Rudi in order to frighten him into a 'confession'?

<sup>72</sup> For example, in H. Price to W. Brown (footnote 70).

You continue: 'I should do my best to explain matters in such a way that you would not be judged too severely'. In other words, having induced Rudi to 'confess', as a reward you would do your best to 'explain the matter'. . . . Do you not think that it is a damnable proposition to put to a youth, and do you not think that you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself? . . .

I have much pleasure in removing your name from our list of Foreign Correspondents . . .

This virtuously indignant letter was dated 12 May 1932—a fortnight *after* Harry Price subsequently alleged he was already convinced that Rudi was dishonest, and that probably the entire Third Series was fraudulent. How could anyone have supposed for one moment that in late April and early May 1932 Price himself was planning, with a time lag of nearly a year, to expose Rudi as a fraud, having in the meanwhile written him and his family the most amicable and affectionate letters?

There were in London at least two persons in addition to Price who knew about the double-exposure photograph before its publication. They were his secretary, Miss Ethel Beenham, and Mrs. K. M. Goldney, at the time joint Honorary Treasurer of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, subsequently Organising Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research and one of the leading personalities in modern psychical research. At some date which she cannot now precisely recall but some time after 28 April 1932, when Mrs. Goldney visited Price at the National Laboratory she found him in a state of pleasurable excitement: he said he had a secret to tell her but she must promise not to tell anyone else. She guessed that he was alluding to a proposed visit to the National Laboratory by the physical medium Carlos Mirabelli; and, knowing how happy Price always was to spring publicity surprises upon the world, she promised. He said—jocularly, she thought—'word of honour?', and Mrs. Goldney, in the same spirit, gave her word and crossed her heart. Price then turned to Ethel Beenham and said: 'Now you are my witness, Ethel, she has sworn that she won't tell'. Harry Price thereupon showed her the double exposure photograph of Rudi saying something like 'we caught him'; Price told her he would publish the photograph if and when it suited *him*, and that it would serve the investigators right who were trying to make an independent investigation of Rudi; he would show them who was the more astute.

Mrs. Goldney tells me that she was horrified, begged to be released from her promise and insisted that Price should immediately call a meeting of his Council and put the full facts before them. However, Price held her to her 'word of honour'. She agreed most reluctantly to keep silent since she had given her promise. Mrs. Goldney says that later on, after much discussion with Lord Charles Hope, she came to doubt the rightness of her decision at the time to keep silent. So far as she knows, she was the sole recipient of this information and she continued to press unavailingly at intervals for a full disclosure. However, at this period Mrs. Goldney was under heavy pressure, working at Queen Charlotte's Hospital, and had few opportunities for seeing Price.

Many years later, after Harry Price's death in 1948, Mrs. Goldney had an interview with Miss Beenham in which the subject of the double-exposure was raised. Miss Beenham, who admitted that her memory was not very precise,

after all these years, stated that she herself never saw anything suspicious in connection with Price or Rudi. The following relevant extract from Miss Beenham's testimony concerning Price, which is preserved in the archives of the Society for Psychical Research, is copied from Mrs. Goldney's copy:

Coming to the photograph showing Rudi's arm free, I arrived at the office and can distinctly remember Mr. Price was in the darkroom developing the photograph and called me in. When the negative showing the freed arm was before us, we both were so astonished that we were speechless. Certainly Mr. Price behaved as if he were amazed and incredulous, as I was. Hardly had we time to discuss the possible implications before Mitzi and Rudi arrived. Mr. Price spoke some very halting German and I had been studying at the Berlitz School of Languages and spoke definitely better than Mr. Price but certainly not fluently. Between us we made Rudi understand the photograph; he suggested it must be a spirit arm (it seems he was as surprised and amazed as we had been) but Mr. Price or I pointed out it could not be because it was in our own pyjama jacket. I was embarrassed naturally, as Rudi was such a nice boy that we all liked, and he left with Mr. Price saying we must continue with the sittings. No definite accusation of fraud was made in so many words.

Mr. Price forbade me to say a word about it to anybody until he had thought it over . . . I cannot remember how long Mr. Price kept silence, whether weeks or months—without reference to the report or other papers. But I know that he intended issuing this accusation in spite against Lord Charles Hope who was having further experiments with Rudi to Mr. Price's annoyance. He regarded it as Lord Charles almost 'stealing' the medium he had brought over, paid for, etc. I was most embarrassed and uncomfortable, knowing this to be a fact, but could do nothing. I very much wanted, I remember, to tell Mrs. Goldney about it, but he held me to silence. Mrs. Goldney reminded me [at the interview after Price's death] that he eventually told her himself. He was terribly spiteful against Lord Charles and he was waiting for a chance to hit back at him and used this report for that purpose.

I don't remember his making remarks against Rudi all this time.

Lord Charles Hope, in a letter to Mr. H. W. Salter of the Society for Psychical Research wrote after Price had sprung his accusation:

May 5 1933

As regards Miss Beenham, I quite see a written statement *ought* to be made by her but the question is how to get it. . . . If you think it any good I could write to Mrs. Goldney. She said Miss B. let out that Price had told Rudi at the time that the matter of the photographs was 'of no importance' and that is what Rudi says he said. But Miss B. is hardly likely to repeat that in writing. . . .<sup>73</sup>

## 12. Price's denunciation, and its repercussions

In the autumn of 1932 Rudi came to London for the Hope-Rayleigh experiments and remained until the early spring. This was the investigation that Price had moved heaven and earth to prevent—and failed. However, if he intended to *eclipse* it he certainly succeeded. By his article in the *Sunday Dispatch* of 5 March 1933 and the subsequent publication of his *Bulletin IV of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research* containing the double-exposure, purporting to be a photographic demonstration of fraud,

<sup>73</sup> C. Hope to W. H. Salter, 5 May 1933 (SPR files, reference S3).

coupled with his tireless energy as a letter writer, he certainly stole the scene (see page 16 in section 7 above, and figures 18 and 19 in section 13 below). His intentions were quite manifest: to deprive both the Osty experiments and the Hope-Rayleigh investigations of scientific certitude and of that quiet respectability at which they aimed.

Lord Charles Hope was in France on holiday when the scandal broke. He wrote at once to Price, requesting an explanation (HPL):

10 March 1933

I was interested yesterday to receive a cutting from a friend out of the *Sunday Dispatch* and learn that you claim to have a photograph taken during a sitting showing Rudi S. with an arm free (while you yourself were controlling him). The article also quotes you as saying it is your opinion that he was, on that occasion at least, achieving his phenomena by fraudulent means.

I shall be interested to hear from you who are the 'we' referred to several times in the article as having made this discovery—whether it is meant to refer to your 'Council' or to whom? Also, I would like to know why you did not tell all the Council of your suspicions, especially I should have thought those you asked to subscribe the cost of bringing out the Report. . . .

Also it is pertinent to ask you whether you proposed to collect donations towards the cost of the proposed further visit of Rudi to the N.L. of P.R. last autumn without informing those supporting the scheme financially of your 'discovery'. Certainly Evelyn and I were invited by you to join in that scheme and you never mentioned the existence of any such photograph or such a suspicion in your mind. . . .

Price's reaction, in a letter (in HPL) dated 13 March 1933, was that he had indeed informed those members of the Council who had been 'loyal' to him and that the initiative for donations had not come from him. 'I do not know why such a fuss is being made over these pictures . . .'.

Of course Price knew, no one better, why such a 'fuss' was being made over the pictures. Once he published his *Bulletin IV* and the *Sunday Dispatch* article, he took the line that all investigations of Rudi other than his own 1929 series had been invalidated by the discovery that Rudi 'could' evade hand control; that Osty's work was worthless because there had been an 'accomplice' and because Osty had not used the electric control; that the Hope-Rayleigh investigation, the results of which were about to be published, was worthless because there had been no electrical control; and that Drs. Fraser-Harris and William Brown had been extremely foolish to rush into print and vouch for Rudi's phenomena when he, Price, had been far more cautious.

Perhaps the letter that most clearly conveys the stance now taken up by Price is that to the Editor of *Nature* of 6 May 1933. After claiming that Rudi had point blank refused to sit without his 'accomplice', he continued:

It had been arranged to hold a series of sittings during the summer of 1931 but negotiations broke down because we refused to allow the 'confederate' (a close friend of Rudi's) to accompany him. When we found that Rudi would not visit the laboratory without his friend, we consented to have her but—after Dr. Osty's experiences—special precautions were taken to keep her under close observation during the seances.

Although Dr. Osty now admits that he detected Rudi's friend producing the 'phenomena' herself, his report contains no mention of this and the fact that she was present at any experiment is not recorded in the account prepared for the public.

Stress has been laid on the fact that our cameras caught Mr. Schneider evading control, but so long ago as 1924 Professors Meyer and Przibram detected Rudi producing 'telekinetic' movement of objects by means of a freed arm. That he *can* free an arm from the usual tactual control (and without the controller's being aware of the fact) has now been proved by our photographic evidence.

Mr. Schneider has promised to visit us during the coming autumn. . . .

Unlike Price's earlier defence of Rudi in which he had stood by Osty, and which the Editor had returned to him, this letter *was* duly published in *Nature*. It is of course a tissue of *suggestio falsii*: Dr. Osty did not 'now' (that is, May 1933) after Price's supposed exposure 'admit' that there had been a 'confederate'; it was Osty who had warned Price in January 1932 to take care that Mitzi might try to reproduce the phenomena. This friendly warning was the only communication that Price ever had from Osty on the subject, and it had certainly been in his possession for six months when he defended Osty to the Editor of *Nature* in July 1932. Four months after Osty's warning (14 May 1932) Price had in writing assured Dr. William Brown that Rudi had never dictated any conditions whatsoever, and on 13 July 1932 Price had reassured Fraser-Harris that none of the earlier 'exposures' alluded to in the *Nature* article amounted to anything. Price indeed had known about the Meyer-Przibram affair at least as early as 1927, when his own house journal, the *British journal of psychical research*, volume 1, March/April 1927, No. 6, had contained an article by Professor Hans Thirring who had dismissed the incident as not proving anything because 'at least one of the controllers was in the plot' (page 171); it had been precisely Thirring's point that such evasion of control was impossible without the connivance of the controller. Moreover, although Rudi had indeed refused to come to London without his fiancée after she had been invited, there is absolutely no reason to suppose that Rudi had insisted on having her at *sittings*—a rather significant difference. Mrs. Goldney wrote a note in 1933 after a visit to the National Laboratory at which she talked to Ethel Beenham

whom I knew very well indeed and with whom I visited Rudi in Braunau (his home). I asked her what was meant by the statement in the letter [to *Nature*] that Rudi had refused point-blank to sit without his 'confederate' being present, and whether this was the truth. Miss Beenham stated emphatically that it was not true, her words being approximately 'no, of course it's not true—I can't imagine why he goes and says such things; I'm sure Rudi would never refuse such a thing. He always consents to anything'. . . . Then Mr. Price walked in and I asked HIM. He at once said 'Certainly' he refused point blank and turned to the secretary and said, 'Didn't he, Ethel?' implying that she should corroborate his statement. Ethel remained silent and Mr. Price hurried on to other statements.

I should say that I had occasion shortly before to refer to something of this sort and THEN Mr. Price said 'that he had begun to ask Rudi to sit without his fiancée, Mitzi (the 'confederate') being present, but that Rudi had not hopped at it and he had therefore dropped the subject at once, as he did not wish to put him out of humour about anything. . . .'<sup>74</sup>

One can see of course that once Price was forced to admit, however obliquely, that Osty had warned him of Mitzi *before* Price's own 1932 sittings, the only possible explanation why Mitzi should have been present at every

<sup>74</sup> K. M. Goldney (footnote 58).

single one of his own sittings that did not reflect grave discredit upon Price himself was the allegation that the medium had refused to give seances without her. Nor did Price ever offer any explanation for failing to tell his fellow investigators (according to Price, co-responsible for control conditions with him) that he had had a warning about Mitzi and that special attention must therefore be paid to her, and that Rudi was supposedly insisting upon having her at sittings despite Price's alleged protests. There are, however, numerous letters in which Price endeavoured to explain why he had kept the supposed evidence of Rudi's fraud to himself since 28 April 1932. Perhaps the most telling one is addressed to the Hon. Everard Feilding (HPL):

July 3 1933

... You mention that you had to say that you could not understand why I did not show those incriminating photographs to my colleagues. But that is exactly what I did do—to those colleagues who were loyal.

I do not suppose that you are aware that Hope, Fraser-Harris, Evelyn and Cochran-Baillie were meeting Rudi in secret before he had been many weeks in the Laboratory. I discovered the 'plot' and there was a terrific row—naturally! When I discovered these photographs I was not on speaking terms with Hope; Dr. Brown had played me a dirty trick in publishing that second letter in the *Times* and I had fallen out with him. Fraser-Harris and Cochran-Baillie and Evelyn were so hand-in-glove with Hope that I dared not show the photographs to them if I did not want Hope to know about them. My relations with those members of the Council whom I have mentioned were such that I was under no obligation to tell them anything. But all the other members of the Council saw the pictures; I also told you about them; Sudre and Dingwall saw them as far back as last October—so there was no secret about the pictures. But as I know that Hope and his friends were doing their best to get Rudi away from us, I did not see (especially as we had come to the end of our experiments) that I should throw all my cards on the table for their benefit....

That Price was not on speaking terms with Charles Hope when the pictures were allegedly 'discovered' by him on 29 April 1932 is undoubtedly true; the fracas at the Council meeting, which seems indeed to have been memorable, took place on 26 April. But he was on the most excellent terms at that point with Dr. William Brown. On 5 May 1932 (certainly well and truly after 29 April, when he had supposedly developed and printed the famous double exposure) he had written to Fraser-Harris that Brown's opinion was worth a dozen of that of Lord Charles Hope and his scientific friends. Dr. Brown's *first* letter to the *Times* came out on 7 May, and Price was 'absolutely delighted' and spoke and wrote to that effect to a large number of persons, even that this letter to the *Times* inaugurated 'a new epoch in psychical research'.

William Brown's second letter to the *Times* did not come out until 14 May after Rudi, whom Price had supposedly taxed with fraud on 29 April, had returned to Austria. The question is not why Price failed to show his discovery *after 14 May*, when Brown had 'played him a dirty trick' by counselling caution towards the phenomena in the pages of the *Times*, but *before 3 May*, when Brown committed himself to the press. Indeed, had Price really been in possession of evidence of fraud when Brown wrote his second letter to the *Times*, his proper course of action would of course have been to congratulate

Brown on his insightful addendum and to show him his 'proof of fraud' instead of abusing him and calling his counsels of caution 'a dirty trick'.

It is entirely plain that on 14 May, and later on, Price took the line that Rudi was wholly genuine and that fraud was out of the question; and it is equally plain that some time, at the very latest between 28 April (the fateful seance) and 8 May (when Rudi left London) Price secretly laid the foundations for an accusation of fraud—the 'cards' he would throw on the table when it suited *him*. This much is quite certain, since we know that he showed Rudi and Mitzi and Ethel Beenham *a* photograph of *a* double exposure before Rudi left England. If a particularly discreditable interpretation of his unquestionably dishonest behaviour is accepted, and this will be discussed below, then he must have begun to lay his foundations months earlier, and his conduct throughout the Third Series was a prolonged set of double dealings.

It is not at all hard to imagine the feelings of Dr. William Brown when he read on page 173 of *Bulletin IV of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research* that the seance of 3 May 1932 'received considerable publicity on account of the various reports which appeared. This publicity was not initiated by any officer of that Laboratory and I [Price] rather deplored it on account of what had happened at the previous sitting and also because several inaccuracies were published in the Press'. The only thing that Price *had* deplored was Brown's 'dirty trick' in qualifying his initial statement to the press, and the only press statement he had said was false was Brown's statement that the medium dictated conditions. It is little wonder that Brown eventually wrote to Hope on 21 March 1933: '... I have written formally asking that my name be removed from the Research 'Group' of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research and also from the bulletin and all other publications, but I've received no reply. I should have done this months ago, but couldn't bring myself to communicate with the man'.<sup>75</sup>

Numerous other resignations followed. On 16 March 1933 the following letter was sent to Rudi by all those members of the National Laboratory for Psychical Research who had been concerned with the investigation:

16 March 1933

Dear Rudi

We do not think Mr. Price's report on your 1932 sittings can possibly prejudice against you any scientific investigator of psychical research.

But in view of the possibility of hasty readers of the Report coming to a false conclusion, we, as Council Members of the National Laboratory who were present at these sittings, wish to state emphatically that we dissociate ourselves from the implications of the Report (about which we were not consulted) and have faith in your integrity.

We are quite willing for you to give any publicity you like to this letter.

Yours truly,

[signed] H. G. Bois

V. Cochran-Baillie

D. Fraser-Harris

Alex Dribbel

Kathleen M. Goldney

Clarice Richards<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> W. Brown to C. Hope, 21 March 1933 (letter SPR files, reference S3; and KMG).

<sup>76</sup> H. G. Bois and others to Rudi Schneider, 16 March 1933 (copy of letter in SPR files, reference S3).

Dr. Gerda Walther also resigned from the National Laboratory and gave her reasons in some considerable detail and at great length (HPL) pointing out the quite astounding inconsistencies in Price's conduct:

April 4 1933

. . . You blame Professor Fraser-Harris, Dr. Brown, etc., for being rather hasty in their favourable reports on Rudi because they published before your book [*Bulletin IV*] had come out and without talking things over with you. Well, firstly, there are other examples of hastiness in psychics (cf. your report of your examination of Mrs. Duncan's alleged teleplasm before you exposed her). Besides here too it was, in my opinion, very unfair of you to your collaborators to keep such important things as your alleged discovery from them, especially as you had published your first Rudi book and in an article published on May 20th 1932 in *Light* (i.e. nearly a month *after* your alleged discovery of fraud!) you had written Rudi had passed everyone of the most stringent laboratory tests with flying colours!

You say you thought it your duty to publish your discovery 'for the sake of truth in psychics' and 'for the sake of further investigators'—but I certainly don't understand then why you didn't think it your duty to do so immediately, and equally why you kept that photo of Willy from publicity for 8 years making ironical statements about Dr. Prince, Bird, Vinton, Dingwall because of their attacks on the Schneiders as they had no proofs of fraud? . . .

Re the other sittings in your book, I was amazed how poor were the conditions of control under which they took place, I simply can't understand how an investigator of your experience could conduct experiments under so poor conditions. . . .

Price's reaction was to write at once (HPL) to Count von Klinckowstroem, whom he had, a few days before, warmly thanked for drawing his attention to the Meyer-Przibram 'exposure' (about which Price had, of course, known years previously):

6 April 1933

I have just had a letter from Dr. Gerda Walther—a letter I had expected weeks ago. As a spiritualist and a personal friend of Rudi's she has taken offence at my Report and resigned her post as our Munich correspondent. She cannot bear to hear the *truth* about Rudi.

As we wish to have a Correspondent in Munich, I am wondering if you will act for us in this capacity. There is nothing to do and no responsibility. . . .

Klinckowstroem does not seem to have been any too eager to be associated with Price. I have not been able to find his reply, but Price's response (HPL) was to be 'delighted to know that you will be our Munich correspondent. Certainly I will keep this matter private, except that I would have liked to include your name among the Correspondents we issue with our Bulletins . . . '.

Price's onslaught on Osty could hardly have been fiercer, and in his correspondence he made his meaning even plainer than in his printed statements. For example, in a letter to Baron von Winterstein he wrote: 'As for Osty, he is making a living out of psychical research (I understand that his position is worth about £1000 a year) and I can understand his attitude towards the whole business' (HPL).

Rudi himself did not realise at first what had happened, or take in its implications, which is hardly surprising since Price's letters were long, involved, numerous and cryptic. Rudi seems to have been under the impression that



‘ Onkel Harry ’ was still angry with him because he had not turned up for the William MacDougall sittings in September 1931. On 7 March 1933 he wrote: ‘ The reason why I didn’t come to you in autumn 1931 was that when you were in Braunau you invited Mitzi and then you wrote the opposite from London ’ (HPL). Eventually Dr. Gerda Walther made the matter plain to him, and drafted for him a letter refusing to go to Price’s Laboratory again in non-committal business-like terms.

### 13. Interpreting the photographic evidence supporting Price’s denunciation

The foregoing must have made it abundantly clear just how complex a skein has to be disentangled before one can get a clear picture of what happened, let alone what it meant. Who, without access to the numerous letters written at the time and kept in different countries and private collections, many of them secret and confidential, and without having kept a close time-table of *what* was said and done *when*, could have emerged with any impression other than that something rather reprehensible was going on?

On the face of it, at some point during the 25th sitting, Rudi’s hand was not held by the controller, Mr. Harry Price, whose interpretation was:

The first flash caught Rudi’s left arm as it was held out straight behind him, the second flash ignited when the medium had got into position again with his head and body turned towards the screen reflector. . . . The double exposure was of great value in showing us the two positions of Rudi: (1) with his left arm free and behind him, and (2) in position again with head and shoulders bent forward and sideways to the left, facing the screen.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, Rudi shifted the handkerchief from the counterpoise table, thus igniting the flash that released the picture, and then quickly got his arm back into position by the time—about half a second later—when the second flash occurred. Price says in his report that after experimenting in the week following the alleged incident of 28 April 1932 he himself succeeded in snatching an object off the counterpoise and getting in position again before the bulbs ignited.<sup>78</sup> But of course Rudi presumably did not have access to the seance room there to experiment at snatching handkerchiefs off the counterpoise table to his heart’s content. In any case, Price letting go Rudi’s hand on one occasion when he was according to himself ‘ unfit to control ’ is one thing; the notion that Rudi, evening after evening, freed his hand from Price’s and several other reputable and independent controllers’ grip, without anyone ever noticing anything amiss or, for that matter, setting in motion the guarding photographic apparatus, seems hard to believe. In his denunciation of Rudi, Price relied on quite a simple psychological device: he first of all gave his interpretation of the photograph as though it were an established fact; he then proceeded to build upon this supposed fact speculations such as ‘ The question now arises as to whether any of the phenomena we saw at the seance on April 28th were genuine. The fact that Rudi can evade control has set us wondering . . . ’. He knew, none better, that the minute the slightest doubt was cast on a single phenomenon and the doubt called certainty of fraud, this

<sup>77</sup> H. Price (footnote 10), 151.

<sup>78</sup> H. Price (footnote 10), 152.

was quite enough as regards the vast majority of people to make them dismiss the entire mediumship as so much nonsense. By 4 April 1934 in a letter to Sir Richard Gregory (in HPL) Price stated that he thought the entire Third Series was fraudulent.

On the other hand, all of Price's co-investigators, to the best of my knowledge, placed a different interpretation upon the double-exposure, namely that the first picture showed Rudi under control, but that the flash led him to give a violent jerk thus freeing his hand, and that therefore it is the second picture that shows the freed arm. For instance, Professor Fraser-Harris, after pointing out the numerous irregularities in connection with the picture's publication, wrote that his explanation of the hand freed for an instant 'is that, when after being hours in the dark, the levitated handkerchief was suddenly lifted off the counterpoise, the suddenness and intensity of the flash-light caused Rudi to jerk reflexedly backward out of Mr. Price's admittedly inadequate grasp'.<sup>79</sup>

The Earl of Powis wrote to me:

August 18 1967

... I know nothing about the double exposure affair. ... When the flash went off, Rudi always gave a violent movement and could easily have broken away from his controllers. A photographic expert who saw the picture as reproduced in Price's paper told me that in his opinion the image with the free hand was the *second* of the two. He based this on the fact that an emulsion which has already been exposed is more sensitive than a virgin one and that the free hand image was darker. ...

Lord Charles Hope, after discussing the difficulty of establishing which exposure came first and which second, wrote:

It appears ... that at 10.41 Mr. Price as controller was definitely holding the medium's hands and that at 10.44, 10.46 and 10.49 he could hardly have helped knowing whether or not he was holding the medium, since at those times there were either phenomena or an injunction to hold tight. Nevertheless we are told that one minute later, at 10.50, the medium had got his hand out of Mr. Price's control without Mr. Price's knowledge and had faked at least one phenomenon. By 10.59 or 11.00 at the latest Mr. Price must again have become 'hand-conscious'.

Altogether phenomena were reported as occurring on at least twenty occasions that evening, and Mr. Price suggests that they may all have been faked as, he alleges, that occurring at 10.50 was faked. What was Mr. Price doing with his right hand while all this was happening? It must be remembered that the usual method of evading hand-control [substituting a sitter's hand for the medium's] was not possible here, for there was nobody on Mr. Price's right and hence nobody whose hand could be mistaken for Rudi's. Are we to believe that twenty times during that evening alone Rudi freed his left hand from Mr. Price's hand without Mr. Price knowing it, and that twenty times he succeeded in getting it back into Mr. Price's hand, also without Mr. Price knowing it? Or that Mr. Price for minutes together, even hours, was holding nothing in his right hand and making no effort to find Rudi's left wrist? I find either of these suppositions incredible in a man of anything like Mr. Price's experience.

<sup>79</sup> D. F. Fraser-Harris, 'Spirit Medium or ...', from *Armchair science* (undated SPR files, reference S3, about 1933). A detailed account by Professor Fraser-Harris of the circumstances leading up to the Harry Price accusation is contained in a statement dated 15 July 1933 (SPR files, 8-10 special folder; also D. F. Fraser-Harris, 'Genuineness of Rudi Schneider, definite conclusions confirmed by recent series of private sittings', *Light*, (17 March 1933), 161-162).

Again, are the distances such as to make Mr. Price's accusation plausible? The chair of the medium (A) and the position of the table (B) on which lay the handkerchief was as shown in this sketch

B

A

not to scale.

The distance between the table and the nearest point of the medium's chair is given on p. 192 [of Price's *Bulletin IV*] as 2 ft. 5½ inches. The position of the medium's chair was in no way fixed, but from a subsequent examination of the room I am convinced that usually the distance was at least 2 ft. 10 ins.

In any case, however, two inches must be added for the distance the handkerchief was from the edge of the table. Rudi's legs and knees were at the time of the movement of the handkerchief in their normal position between the controller's legs: this is clear from the photographs. Only the upper part of his body therefore was capable of any appreciable movement. Rudi is rather below the average height. Could he, while his legs were immobilised, twist sufficiently round to enable his left hand to move an object at least 2 ft. 7½ inches from the right side of the chair? . . .<sup>80</sup>

Anyone can reconstruct this scene with the aid of a table and a chair and will, I think, see that it would have been quite impossible for the medium to have done this in the position in which he was photographed without exciting the immediate suspicion of controller and second controller. As Thirring had said in connection with the Meyer-Przibram affair, the controller would have to be in the plot.

From what has been said so far and the documents cited, it will be quite clear that at the time Price did not believe that Rudi had cheated on 28 April 1932, or at least behaved in every respect as if he did not believe it, until many months later. He seems to have kept the double exposure as a 'card' up his sleeve, to play if and when he saw fit in the light of circumstances. At one point he had obviously hoped to play Dr. William Brown off against Lord Charles Hope, when he had said that Brown's opinion was worth that of a dozen of Hope's scientific friends, even when this failed he still tried by every means in his power to prevent an independent investigation of Rudi. However, in October 1932 Rudi came to London for the Hope-Rayleigh investigation and Price had finally lost his bid for a monopoly, or at least a British monopoly, of Rudi's services. We can say with certainty that Price did not seriously consider treating the double exposure as proof of fraud on Rudi's part until August or September 1932. Once he had committed himself to this view in print, in March 1933, he stuck to it irrespective of anything he himself might have said, done or written earlier.

As regards the photograph of the double exposure, there are several possibilities. To begin with, I had only seriously considered two alternatives: either that the sequence of the two exposures was what Price suggested, namely that Rudi freed an arm, was caught doing so by the first flash, and quickly re-inserted his hand into Price's controlling grip, this being the second flash; or that the handkerchief was levitated as it had been on previous occasions,

<sup>80</sup> C. Hope (footnote 13), 289.

thus releasing the flash of the first exposure, Rudi gave his usual convulsive jerk, Price let go, and the second flash caught Rudi's freed arm. To the best of my knowledge, these are the only possible alternatives which have been seriously discussed to date. If Price's version is correct, this hardly even accounts for the manifestations of this particular seance in a normal manner. It certainly does not follow that Rudi was free to produce phenomena when anyone other than Price was controlling; and it in no wise explains the partial occultations of the infra-red rays.

If, on the other hand, those of Price's opponents were right who believed that Rudi was wholly innocent and that Price had exploited an ambiguous photograph to gain his own ends, a number of possibilities are open. Most of Price's former collaborators, such as Mrs. Goldney, Professor Fraser-Harris and Major C. V. C. Herbert (Lord Powis) took the view that Price had made use of a photographic accident, or misinterpreted such an accident. Osty and probably Lord Charles Hope were somewhat more reserved as regards the 'accident' theory: there were altogether too many coincidences involved; the incident occurred soon after a virulent row in the Council; the flash-light *happened* to misfire just when Rudi had freed his hand; the ceiling camera plate *happened* to be fogged on the same occasion; Price *happened* to be controlling at the time and *happened* to be suffering from a disabling tooth ache; and the photographic equipment *happened* to be dismantled immediately after the 'accident'. Osty, in his 'L'étrange conduite de M. Harry Price', whilst not dotting his 'i's and crossing his 't's, plainly let it be inferred that he thought the photograph was no accident, especially when viewed against the background of Price's documented behaviour before and after the crucial seance.

Indeed the 'accident exploited by Price' theory is open to a number of grave objections, among the most important of which is the fact that Price himself was controlling Rudi at seance no. 25. How could he have failed to notice that Rudi had freed his hand, especially during a flash? The 'toothache' seems hardly an adequate explanation. And if he was in such agony, why had he not allowed Rudi to be controlled by somebody else? Actually we have some interesting testimony concerning Price's toothache from one of the sitters, a medical man, Dr. Hutton Chisholm, whose only sitting with Rudi was the famous seance of 28 April 1932. In a letter to Professor Fraser-Harris Chisholm wrote that Price claimed that 'Olga' had cured him of toothache, that Price had gone out of his way to insist on the excellence of control conditions, and that in his view fraud was quite out of the question.<sup>81</sup> Miss Irene Manby, another sitter at this particular seance, also stated that Price went out of his way to demonstrate the perfection of his control.<sup>82</sup> In the report itself there is a reference to 'Olga' stroking 'Onkel Harry's' cheek to cure his neuralgia. Why should Chisholm, whose only seance this was, have misremembered Price's claim to have been 'cured'?

If the double exposure photograph was no accident, then Price must have contrived it. Osty had suggested no more than that Price had deliberately arranged in advance for a double flash so that he, as Rudi's controller, could let go of the medium's arm, thus obtaining a double exposure of a freed and a controlled arm: the neuralgia claim would then simply be an alibi for poor

<sup>81</sup> J. H. Chisholm to D. F. Fraser-Harris, letter published in *Light*, (17 March 1933), 183.

<sup>82</sup> I. Manby, letter to the Editor of *Light*, (26 May 1933), 324.

controlling. Price himself had installed the photographic equipment and, without informing or consulting anyone, he dismantled it immediately after the famous seance. As a matter of fact, it would have been easy for Price to arrange for a double flash because he used two bulbs in his Vaku-Blitz apparatus after an alleged failure at an earlier seance (seance no. 7, 25 February 1932) on the part of a 'faulty detonator' in the Vaku-Blitz.<sup>83</sup> The theory that Price, in his bitter resentment against his colleagues and Rudi, decided to rig two successive flashes is certainly somewhat more in keeping with the train of events than the concatenation-of-accidents theory, and it fits in far better with Price's conduct before and after the fateful seance.

It is a curious feature of the extremely bitter controversy that ensued that Price's opponents hardly seem to have bothered to examine with any degree of care the pictures he had printed. Even from the ludicrously poor prints published by Price, it is clear that there is a major objection to the 'Price-letting-go-Rudi's-hand-on-purpose' theory, as well as to the 'Rudi-accidentally-wrenching-his-hand-free' theory; and that is the actual appearance of Rudi's back and arm on the photograph. If Price deliberately released Rudi's wrist and possibly gave it a push, relying on the medium's constant convulsive activity in trance, one would have expected his *left* arm to fly back to the left side of the chair back (on the far side of the chair back relative to the control camera), or, if he twisted himself round, so that his *left* arm shot past the *right* side of the chairback (the nearside of the chair relative to the control camera) one would have expected considerable rucking and twisting of the striped pyjama jacket; but the picture shows Rudi's back in placid near-repose. The appearance of the photo is quite inconsistent with the theory that Rudi's *left* arm flew, or was thrown, back past the *right* side edge of the back of the chair (see figure 16 in section 7).

There is, however, another possibility, and if this is taken seriously, then Rudi's hand was never free during the double flash at all. One cannot rule out the possibility that the pictures published by Price, purporting to show Rudi's free arm, were carefully prepared fakes.

There is something extremely odd about the photographs published by Price as plates XVIII, XIX, XX and XXI. My corresponding figures are 19, 18 (see below), 16 (see section 7 above) and 20 (see below). As published by Price in his *Bulletin*, these were of such poor quality that Dr. Spencer, President of the Royal Photographic Society, remarked 'that all were out of focus or defective to such an extent as to be almost useless as evidence'.<sup>84</sup> However, Price never published any prints other than the ones reproduced in his *Bulletin* and in the *Sunday Dispatch*, and declined to allow anyone to inspect his negatives. His main picture is Plate XX (my figure 16) which shows a view of the sitters, some of the apparatus and the medium with his back to the camera, partly obscured by the hugely draped dark lampshade which is hanging down extremely low. The half-tone reproduction is poor in quality, and small details are indistinguishable. According to Price's legend under the figure, 'handkerchief has been dropped behind curtain. Corner of handkerchief can

<sup>83</sup> H. Price (footnote 10), 44.

<sup>84</sup> W. T. L. Becker to H. Price, 7 January 1938 (copy in SPR files, reference S9). Dr. Becker sent his correspondence with Price to the Society for Psychical Research 'as it shows how H.P. reacts to criticism of his work and findings'.

be seen under table'. What can in fact be seen under the table is what looks like the vertical edge of a fold of the curtain.

If one now examines the stereogram, plate XIX (my figure 18) to see what is underneath the table, we find that, according to these twin pictures, there is a flattened white oblong shape which looks nearly horizontal and corresponds to the rectilinear white patch in plate XX (my figure 16) partly obscured by the curtain. This might perhaps be the corner of a handkerchief most of which is in the shadow cast by the curtain and table. It seems strange that Price should have particularly drawn attention in the legend to the peculiarly poor details of whatever was the 'corner of handkerchief . . . under table'. Furthermore, one is struck by the strange white vertical object in the upper part of the right-hand edge on the left stereogram, which cuts across the medium's arm. At first one thinks this must be the medium's back, seen from the slightly different and lower angle of the stereocamera. However, it cannot be the back, since this is curved forwards whereas this white object is straight; nor can it be the lamp covering which is plainly much darker.

Now in Price's plate XVIII (my figure 19), which is supposed to be an enlargement of the left-hand stereogram of plate XIX (my figure 18), this important detail is completely different in shape from the 'same' detail in plate XIX (my figure 18). This something or other hiding a large part of Rudi shows every sign of having been painted in; and figure 19 is plainly not an enlargement of figure 18 (left side) as claimed by Price. Yet this extraordinarily dubious 'enlargement' (figure 19) is the first of the photographs, Plate XVIII, purporting to demonstrate fraud, to be reproduced.

If one scrutinises Plate XXI (my figure 20, which is truly an enlargement of the central portion of his plate XX (figure 16)), one finds that Rudi is sitting in a very peculiar attitude, with his back to the camera and therefore nearly at an angle of 90 degrees to his 'controller', Price, and that during both exposures. If Rudi had been under proper control, that is, facing Price (as was that evening particularly demonstrated to sitters, according to Dr. Chisholm and Miss Manby), then one of his aspects should show Rudi sideways on, the other turned as in fact shown. If he had not thus turned anti-clockwise, through nearly a right angle to the back of the chair, then he could not have passed his almost straight *left* arm past the *right* near side) of the chair back, towards the counterpoise table. Yet the enlargement of the central detail does not show *any* sideways view, as can be clearly seen by examining the pyjama stripes. There are 'two back views', and in one of these the medium bends forward a little more.

Returning to a closer examination of the main plate XX (figure 16), one also asks: what on earth is the bolster or cushion doing that has been hung up by a piece of string from a book case behind the medium's outstretched arm? There is nothing like it in any other photograph of a seance or the seance room. Another puzzling detail is the absence of a hand in the pyjama jacket of the outstretched arm. In all the relevant photographs this sleeve is plainly visible, all the stripes on the jacket standing out clearly. Yet the sleeve opening of the jacket is empty. There are some blurs so faint as to be barely visible under a strong magnifying glass that might conceivably be ghostly—very ghostly—fingers, but which could not be a human hand. Is the hand supposed to be hidden in the pyjama sleeve? In that case, one might have expected Price

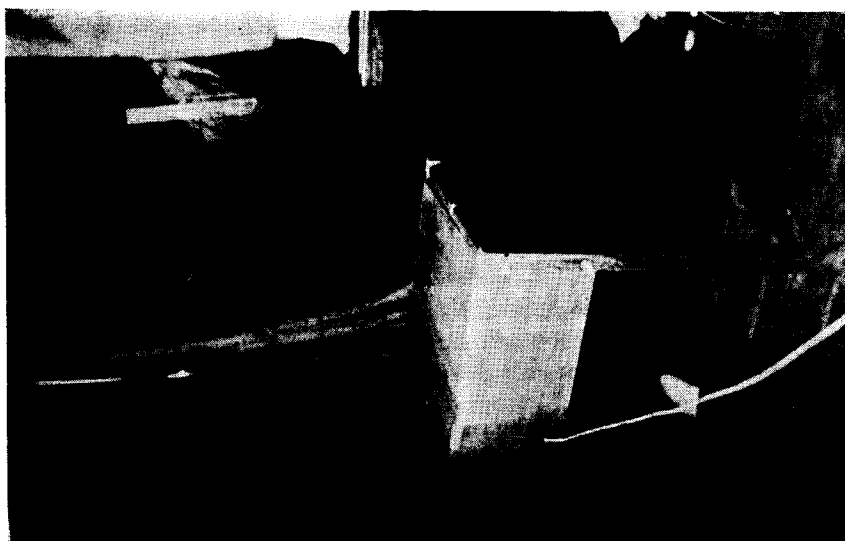


Figure 19.

Price's alleged enlargement of figure 18. This can clearly be seen not to be identical with figure 18: in particular, the vertical patch at the top right is different in shape and coloration. Both details show evidence of having been painted in. Plate XVIII, p. 154 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

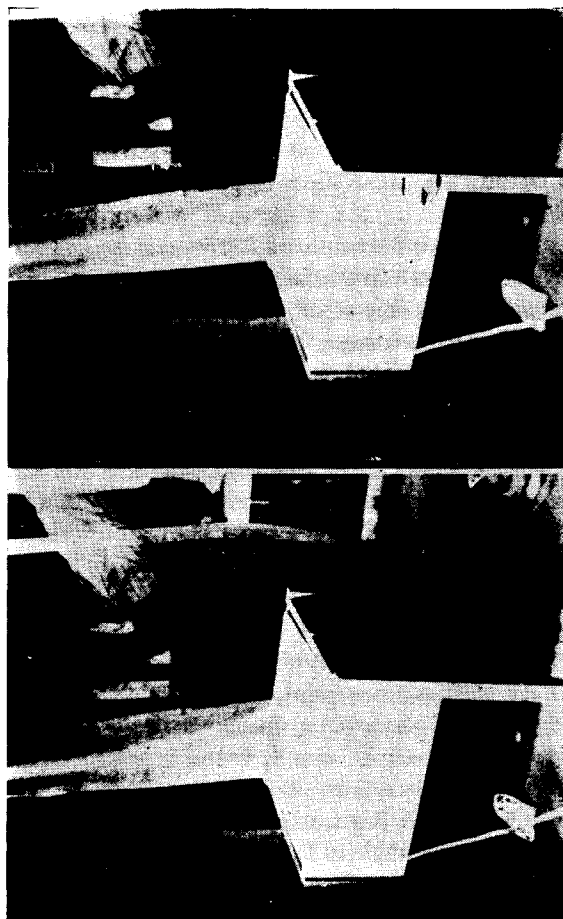


Figure 18.

Stereogram allegedly referring to the same incident as that depicted in figures 16, 19 and 20. The oblong white patch at the bottom left is curious when compared to the corresponding detail in figure 16. The legend for this figure, which is plate XIX, p. 160 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10), states that 'handkerchief had been dropped behind curtain. Corner of handkerchief can be seen under table'; but to what this refers is far from clear. The most questionable aspect of the left stereogram is the vertical white patch at the top right of the picture, which does not seem to correspond to anything in figure 16, and looks as though it had been painted in.



Figure 20.

Central portion of 'control photograph' (figure 16, Price's plate XX) allegedly showing Rudi's freed left arm. This is the only portion of the plate originally left unobscured by brown paper in the Harry Price Library archives. Price's legend states that this detail 'shows Rudi sideways on chair facing screen'. The feet, which face 90° to the right as if Rudi had his back to the back of the chair, are of course cut out and were covered by brown paper. Plate XXI, facing p. 188 of *Bulletin IV* (footnote 10).

to discuss how Rudi could have removed the handkerchief from the counterpoise table in a pyjama jacket the sleeves of which were many inches too long for him. One might have thought the sleeve would droop or seem empty where Rudi's hand ended, but the portrayed sleeve has a well-formed opening. Is the suggestion that Rudi swept the table with the sleeve or some implement hidden in the sleeve? (Reconstruction of the event shows that he would have needed a reaching device of at least about 15 inches in length to touch the table top in the position shown.) Price's failure to discuss the empty sleeve is a very curious omission indeed, particularly from an expert in conjuring.

The negative plate from which Price's illustration XX (my figure 16) was made is preserved in the University of London Library as No. 530 of the Harry Price Collection. I obtained permission from the Collection's Curator, Dr. A. H. Wesenecraft, to have it copied. However, it was found that a detailed examination was quite impossible because brown paper was stuck over it, leaving only a 'window' in the middle exposing the central detail shown in Price's plate XXI (my figure 20). Mr. Colin Brookes-Smith, an instrumentation engineer and expert in photography, who gave me extensive and generous help in connection with the photographs, their enlargement and



interpretation, suggested that a firm of professional photographers should be employed to remove the covering as this might demand extremely skilful handling of such an important photographic plate. Several prominent psychical researchers, including Dr. D. J. West, past-President of the Society for Psychical Research, recommended that the possible risk entailed in removing this brown paper should be taken. Dr. Wesenraft kindly gave permission for this to be done and for enlargements to be made. In the event, the photographers employed, Messrs. Blinkhorn of Banbury, had little difficulty, since the brown paper turned out to be stuck on to the glass, not the emulsion side of the plate. Figure 16 is a reproduction of plate 530 after the removal of the brown paper.

Several enlargements of the parts previously covered by the brown paper tape were made. The most compromising details of all was perhaps an enlargement showing part of Rudi's left leg, sock and shoe (figure 21). They can be seen between Harry Price's right foot and Mrs. de Gernon's feet, which are partly obscured by some flowers with large leaves resting on the upturned wastepaper basket immediately under the suspended lamp. Rudi's left foot is



Figure 21.

Maximum enlargement of details from print of Price's Plate 530 (my figure 16) after the brown paper covering had been removed, showing part of Rudi's left leg, sock and shoe and right trouser leg. The left foot is clearly pointing to the right, that is, at right angles to direction of the back in figures 16 and 20. It is also clear that between the flashes of the double exposure the medium's foot only moved very slightly.

facing Price and is quite clearly at an angle of about 90 degrees to the camera. Rudi's foot has moved slightly between flashes by not more than about half an inch; in other words, corresponding to the foot and leg one would expect in the main picture two *side* views of Rudi. Yet there are two *back* views, and this is amply borne out by the new enlargements. Little is visible of Rudi's right leg except the kneefolds, but it seems to have been virtually stationary between the two flashes. The conclusion seems to me inescapable that the back belongs to a different occasion from that on which the legs were taken.

Once one has seen a well-printed enlargement of the plate and has one's attention drawn to Rudi's foot and legs, so far as they are visible, it does indeed look very odd that the foot should be pointing one way and the back another. However, Price's half-tone illustration is so poor that one would hardly be likely to notice Rudi's foot at all. Why did Price tell Professor Fraser-Harris that he only had 'some poor prints'? He could quite easily have made excellent ones! No one was ever allowed to inspect the actual plate. Had they persisted, they would presumably have found it largely obscured by brown tape that hid the foot. So far as I could ascertain, no other plate in Price's large collection of plates was so obscured.

Mr. Brookes-Smith gave it as his opinion that the photograph purporting to be an exposure of the medium Rudi Schneider, and reprinted in *Bulletin IV*, was a fake. He suggested that Price superimposed a secretly taken photograph of an extended arm on a photograph taken at an actual seance. Price contrived a double flash photograph of this seance so as to enable him to explain away any mis-matching between the two super-imposed pictures as being due to the effects of the double flash. In Mr. Brookes-Smith's view, there were originally three plates: an 'A' plate showing an extended arm and a back; a 'B' plate, the double exposure taken at an actual seance; a 'C' plate resulting from a re-photographing of a retouched composite print made by superimposing enlarged images of 'A' and 'B'. Price almost certainly destroyed 'A' and 'B', and the surviving plate No. 530, originally largely covered with brown paper, is this 'C' plate, from which the illustrations in Price's *Bulletin IV* as well as the enlargement (figure 21) were made.

Whether or not one accepts the interpretation of plate 530 as an elaborate fake, there cannot in my view be any doubt that figure 20 is not an enlargement of the left-hand stereogram of figure 18. On the face of it, some gross re-touching has taken place.

#### 14. Summary of possible interpretations of the photographs

To summarise the situation, the following are the different possible interpretations of the photograph published by Mr. Harry Price in the *Sunday Dispatch* of 5 March 1933 and in the *Bulletin IV*:

(1) Rudi freed his hand from Price's control without Price noticing what he was doing, and stretched out his hand towards the counterpoise table. (He could not have reached this without an implement in the attitude shown.) Rudi then re-inserted his hand into Price's. On this, Price's interpretation, the first flash shows Rudi's freed arm; the second took him controlled once more.

(2) Rudi gave a convulsive jerk in response to the first flash; Price let go and there happened to be a second flash taking Rudi's freed arm. Price

did not notice that this had happened, but he discovered the double exposure when developing the negatives and made use of this accident to discredit his enemies.

(3) Price contrived a double flash. He released Rudi's hand *after* the first flash and threw it back; the first shot would then show Rudi controlled, the second flash free.

(4) Price contrived a double flash and knew exactly when it was coming because he himself controlled it. Just beforehand he swivelled Rudi round by 90 degrees so that the latter had his back to the camera, released or pushed back his hand, then took one picture, seized the hand again and the second flash caught Rudi controlled again.

(5) The picture is a cleverly contrived fake, the result of super-imposing a hypothetical plate containing an exposure of a back and an outstretched arm upon the double-flash picture taken at seance no. 25, when Rudi's hand was in fact held at the time and the medium remained facing his controller, Price.

(6) The camera at seance no. 25 photographed a materialised arm, and Price used it to score off his enemies.

Hypotheses (2) and (3), which at first sight look the simplest explanations, must, at least in my view, be ruled out. How in the time available could a person, on having his *left* arm released or even pushed, manage to get it round the *right* side of the back of the chair? If he swivelled round by about 90 degrees, this would be clearly shown by the disposition of the pyjama stripes. Furthermore, a person released during trance and wildly swivelling about the upper part of the body would not keep feet and legs virtually stationary facing in their original direction. The photograph shows that at least Rudi's left foot was not constrained by Price.

On hypothesis (1) Rudi sat at 90 degrees to his controller before and during both flashes and stretched out his hand just before the first flash, bending forward slightly whilst doing so. He then, in time for the second flash, put his hand forwards so that only his elbow was still visible from the angle at which the camera took his picture. Even with the most complaisant controller, there is a limit to what a medium can do with one freed hand, his left, and one free hand would not suffice to explain the other phenomena observed even at this seance. It could not explain the partial occultations of the infra-red beam observed on other occasions in this series of Price's. There is also the problem of the empty sleeve, the distances involved, and the other considerations discussed at length.

If Rudi and Price were confederates, one might have expected something like this fact to emerge from the correspondence between them, certainly after Price had published his double exposure photograph and his accusations of fraud. Yet the lengthy correspondence shows every indication of being that between a sophisticated and rather condescending investigator and his naive, somewhat simple medium, Rudi sadly lamenting that it should still be necessary to convince 'Onkel Harry' of his innocence. And, after all, much the same set of phenomena were observed by Osty beforehand and by the Hope-Rayleigh investigators subsequently.

Theory (4) might be considered on the supposition that Rudi's secondary personality was amenable to suggestion from Price to the extent of swivelling

round and sitting on the chair sideways and putting his hand back, and then rapidly re-inserting into Price's hand. There may have been no movement, paranormal or otherwise, of the handkerchief accompanying the double flash; there is no satisfactory photographic evidence of any movement (or for that matter existence) of any handkerchief on Plate XX (figure 16). However, it seems barely credible that 'Olga' (of all 'people') should have been quite so malleable to Price; and furthermore, (4), like (1), has to meet the difficulty of Rudi's leg and foot. If Rudi was sitting with his back to the camera so as to be able to get his left arm past the right side of the back of the chair, why were his legs and foot unambiguously facing Price, sideways onto the camera? Also, on both theories (4) and (1), just as on theories (2) and (3), it is difficult to account for the absence of Rudi's hand.

On theory (5) Price never let go of Rudi's hand at all, but rather created a plate by superimposing upon the double-flash picture another posed plate on which either the medium or another person or a dummy was shown with his back to the camera and with his arm outstretched. This would fully account for the fact that the back is facing one way and the feet another; why there was blatant retouching of the enlargement of the left half of the stereogram; why the sleeve is empty (if a dummy was used); why there is no side view of Rudi visible on either exposure; and why a black backcloth was hung up by a bit of string from a bookcase behind the 'freed arm'. Nor do we have to suppose that the whole plan would have been contingent upon the paranormal levitation of a handkerchief. Both flashes could have been triggered off at Price's own discretion by means of some concealed electrical connection between the flash bulb apparatus and a switch, perhaps under the carpet, that he could operate with his foot.

There are two *prima facie* objections to theory (5), the fake photo interpretation. One is the fact that some of the retouching is so clumsy and crude as to be quite incompatible with the highly expert and subtle faking that would have been required. The other objection is that several essential conditions and precautions for it must have been created or devised long before Price quarrelled with Lord Charles Hope, Professor Fraser-Harris, Dr. William Brown and the other scientists.

As regards the first objection—that the mixture of clumsiness and expertise seems inconsistent—this can be met when it is recalled that Price was a highly-skilled conjuror, a past-master in the art of deflecting attention from what was really essential to a proper understanding of the situation. His constant drawing attention to the ambiguous 'handkerchief' under the table quite effectively deflected attention from the placid back, the feet pointing in the wrong direction, the faked shapes in the stereograms. Again, no-one but Price had access to his negatives during his lifetime. His opponents only had extremely poor prints published by him. They could not tell what was a fault in the paper and what was a carefully produced effect, and Price knew he would never give them any opportunity for a closer scrutiny: what he did produce over all was a superb impressionistic sketch that conveyed just what he wished to convey. Furthermore, Price's co-investigators were entirely deflected from what, on hypothesis (5), he had really done, by his almost unbelievably underhand conduct in keeping an allegedly compromising picture secret for a year; in using their money and their names for the purpose of

bringing out his report which they had never seen and which was manifestly designed to damage them; in testifying to his belief in the genuineness of the phenomena when he was preparing to denounce them. This latter manoeuvre was what, to most of his fellow investigators, constituted his main crime; and most of them were far too angry to examine dispassionately just exactly what Price had done. The scientists who were not specifically psychical researchers, such as C. C. L. Gregory, Professor Pollard and several others, seem hardly to have taken any notice of the fracas over the freed arm picture, contenting themselves with the general reflection that Rudi could easily have jerked an arm free during a seance and that in any case it did not matter since the phenomena had by then been replicated under different conditions and auspices. The objections to the fake theory, then, on the grounds that a mixture of crude and subtle faking is incongruous and could hardly have escaped detection, falls to the ground: the crude re-touching, and Price's blatant breach of good faith could have served successfully to deflect attention from the real, major, faking.

What of the time factor? I originally rejected theory (5), the faked photograph hypothesis, because it seemed as though, for this to be true, Price would have had to lay his plans for his forgery months before his open quarrel with his Council. I could not reconcile this careful plotting with his obvious and passionate desire to have Rudi accepted as genuine by the learned world in England and all over Europe until as late as July 1932 when (13 July 1932) he assured Fraser-Harris that there was 'not a shred of evidence that Rudi ever cheated' and when he solemnly protested on 27 July to the Editor of *Nature* against an attack on Rudi in that journal, and upheld all of Osty's work. Nor can there be one moment's doubt that Price was violently and genuinely angry with William Brown on 14 May 1932 for having written his second letter to the *Times*, adopting a more reserved attitude towards Rudi's phenomena: 'Never once has Rudi dictated conditions', he wrote to Brown on 14 May 1932 (HPL), although about a year later he was to claim that Rudi had insisted on having his 'accomplice' present during sittings and that he had caught Rudi cheating on 28 April 1932.

The first written reference we have to a quarrel between Price and his Council occurs in a letter from Lord Charles Hope to Price dated 8 April 1932, after which relations deteriorated disastrously. It was from this time onwards that Price was faced with the determination of his Council to conduct an independent investigation. I find it extremely hard to credit that Price definitely organised a frame-up of Rudi before April 1932, though judging by the violence of his feelings and his undoubted duplicity afterwards I find no difficulty in believing that he decided on such a nefarious course subsequently. He could have prepared such a fake exposure, intending to use it if and only if his enemies actually succeeded in capturing Rudi.

Taking into account the physical conditions of seances, it looks at first as though, for the crucial photograph to be a fake constructed by super-imposition of plates, Price must have begun his campaign much earlier than 28 April 1932, since certain preparations were essential for such a fake. The most important of these as described in the *Bulletin IV* are the substitution of two flash bulbs for one (25 February, page 44), the substitution of an armless chair (10 March, page 66), and the covering and lowering of the lampshade (7 April, pages

109–112). In fact, however, we only have Price's word for it that he made these changes as early as he said he did: *Bulletin IV* was published nearly a year later, and he was the only person who had a minute-by-minute seance record dictated to his secretary at the time. What would have been easier than for him to slip in less than half a dozen comments suggesting that changes were made at an earlier date than was the case? We have only Price's word for it that any bulb failed to ignite on 25 February 1932; and even if such a bulb failure occurred at that date, if the passage is read attentively, it will be seen that there is no assertion as to precisely when two bulbs instead of one were fitted—for all we know it could have happened only at seance 25, or even conceivably not at all except for purposes of publication in *Bulletin IV*!

Once one realises that there is no need to accept any part of Price's published record as necessarily truthful or accurate, one can see at once that, by slipping in no more than four or five sentences by way of comment he could, without even arousing his own secretary's suspicions, have conveyed the impression that at least some of the arrangements essential for a fake were made at dates so early that no one would have been willing to interpret them as preparations for a frame-up. Furthermore, we have only Price's own word for it that he showed Rudi 'the incriminating photograph' on the morning after the seance. He could have done so at any time before Rudi's departure, and he could have shown Rudi any photograph he chose in which a pyjama clad arm was seen behind the medium's back. Mrs. K. M. Goldney has no recollection of just when Price showed her the 'incriminating photograph': she says it could have been any time after 28 April 1932. But clearly, it could not possibly have been earlier than 23 May 1932 when she wrote a long letter to William Brown, taking him to task for his second letter to the *Times* in which he had expressed some reservations about the phenomena and implied doubts about Price's Laboratory and urged the need for further investigation. She concluded her letter to Dr. Brown:

23 May 1932

... Will you forgive this long epistle? I have been drawn into it by disappointment on Mr. Price's account that his initiative, his really hard work and energy in running the Lab and putting through the investigation of Rudi should apparently be 'damned with such faint praise' as is implied by your second article. . . .<sup>85</sup>

How could she have written in this vein had she at this point been in possession of the information that Price had a photograph purporting to be an exposure of Rudi which he would keep a secret but which he would publish if and when it suited him to revenge himself on his 'enemies', notably Dr. William Brown? On the contrary, Mrs. Goldney would presumably have been relieved that Dr. Brown had, by his second and more cautious letter, safeguarded himself to some extent against Price's eventual 'exposure' of Rudi.

If all these factors are taken into account, it now becomes quite possible to suppose that Harry Price decided some time, not necessarily earlier than 28 April 1932 and possibly later, to stage his double exposure photograph; and he could at any time subsequently have arranged for what Mr. Brookes-Smith called the 'A' plate by means of a dummy. Price therefore had plenty of time in which to plan for a fake and absolute discretion as regards the date of

<sup>85</sup> K. M. Goldney to W. Brown, 23 May 1932 (KMG).

publication of his Report; indeed, he was free to decide whether to publish at all or not, and he had considerable latitude as regards its contents. There can be no question concerning his technical skill or lack of scruple and fierce aggressiveness.

This, then, is theory (5), namely that Price faked the photograph of seance no. 25. Another variant of (5) is that Price had all along intended some sort of frame-up of Rudi during the Third Series. Anyone wishing to take this harshest of all possible views would stress the questions: why did he omit the electrical control by which he set such almost fanatical store? Why did he arrange for such very unfortunate advance publicity for Rudi when the latter arrived in England? Why did he keep secret from his fellow investigators Osty's warning concerning Mitzi and, worse still, why did he have Mitzi present at sittings, and outside the circle of sitters, next to his secretary?

There is yet another possible interpretation, (6), of the episode, that should at least be mentioned; that the photograph at seance no. 25 recorded an actually materialised arm, and that Price either honestly mistook this paranormal appearance for fraud, or at least used it as such. Although I am willing to concede the possibility of such an occurrence in principle, there is so much evidence of tampering, chicanery and contrivance in connection with this photograph that it seems to me gratuitous to hypothesise any paranormal explanation. The theory should however at least be mentioned because it is at any rate *an* alternative to an elaborate and deliberate fraud on Harry Price's part. On this interpretation he would have made use of what might be called a paranormal accident to revenge himself on those who had slighted him in the belief that he really had proof of fraud which he decided to publish or not according to how he, Price, was treated by his colleagues. Such conduct would disqualify him as a serious investigator, but it would at least not involve him in a charge of painstaking faking and a blatant frame-up.

To me, the fake photograph theory presents the fewest difficulties, but others may judge differently. On *no* interpretation, unfortunately, can Price's conduct be vindicated. Even on the view that he was fully persuaded that the photograph constituted unambiguous proof of Rudi's guilt, he lied, verbally and in writing, to a large number of people in vouching for the complete authenticity of the medium and Rudi's entire trustworthiness and compliance at all times *after* the alleged event; and if he had what he deemed adequate proof of guilt his co-investigators, several of whom had in fact financed the venture and whom he claimed to be jointly responsible with himself for the investigation, were plainly entitled to know that he had such proof.

Either Price put some accident to most nefarious use; or else he staged a bogus accident. There is no escape from this dilemma.

### 15. A variety of conclusions

A number of issues arise out of a detailed consideration of the impact of Price's denunciation of Rudi Schneider. These might be summarised under the following headings: (1) The general question as to what constitutes orthodoxy in science and what are the criteria for separating genuine and pseudo-science; (2) The special problems in designing and interpreting experiments in psychical research; (3) Ethical questions arising out of investigations in unorthodox fields; (4) The recording and communication of findings in

unorthodox fields; and (5) Fraud and scientific research. I shall treat them in turn.

15.1. *Orthodoxy in science.* There is at the very heart of the scientific enterprise a conflict which does not become apparent unless one is faced with the investigation of a set of assertions currently outside the scientific framework. On the one hand, science is concerned with the dispassionate and systematic investigation of any aspect of the world that happens to come under scrutiny; on the other hand, science is also based on the assumption that certain things cannot happen, and may be safely dismissed as superstition. One such ostensibly impossible set of happenings is the movement of large material objects without a physical cause. Laboratory observation (or for that matter any other kind) would become difficult if, say, specimens to be weighed were to affect balances without any known physical increase or decrease in weight. Now it is precisely this type of phenomenon that is being subjected to scrutiny in the case of the investigation of a physical medium such as Rudi Schneider. The movement of a handkerchief, or the partial occultations of an infra-red beam are, on the face of it, physical impossibilities without some agency; and yet it is obviously proper to examine such a claim, and to do so with a foregone negative conclusion clearly offends against the whole spirit of the scientific enterprise.

This is not the place to discuss at length the 'demarcation problem', and the question whether belief or method should be at the basis of science, issues discussed as long ago as 1954 in connection with psychical research.<sup>86</sup> However, the stormy events of Rudi's career point up sharply the basic issues that arise in practice if the conflict in theory is not explicitly faced. If certain happenings are deemed impossible *a priori* by the scientific community, then the provision of contrary evidence becomes a virtually hopeless task since any evidence against these happenings, however ludicrously inadequate, will seem acceptable to the 'educated' public. In any field more accepted than that of psychical research, the Osty, Hope-Rayleigh and Schwaiger investigations of Rudi Schneider would have far outweighed the allegations of Harry Price, the threadbare nature of which would have been apparent once it was carefully considered. One practical consequence of a theoretical negative *a priori* assumption is that evidence in favour of the phenomena in question will tend to be discounted uncritically whereas evidence against them will be accorded privileged status.

There is here a real danger of rendering certain phenomena in principle, and hence in practice, invulnerable to demonstration.

15.2. *Some special problems in designing experiments in psychical research.* Supposing the basic theoretical problem were overcome, there are a number of special problems for the field of psychical research or parapsychology, several of which are highlighted by the Schneider investigation. The most widely discussed perhaps is the elusiveness of the alleged manifestations: at present the phenomena can neither be produced to order nor can general circumstances be described in which they might reasonably be expected. In the case of a

<sup>86</sup> C. C. L. Gregory and A. Kohsen (Anita Gregory), *Physical and psychical research: an analysis of belief* (1954, Reigate: Omega Press).



medium such as Rudi where phenomena are fairly constant over a number of years, experiments can be, and of course were, conducted with him; but in the absence of a more general theory quantifying the forces involved, no satisfactory predictions can be made concerning other individuals or circumstances.

The fact that phenomena are apt to be so intimately associated with a particular named individual creates all sorts of practical problems for experimentation. For one thing, as will have become quite clear, a medium of this type is immensely in demand: he is, so to speak, a valuable property both from the point of view of scientific investigation and also from the less disinterested motives of the quest for publicity, publication potential, money. In the case of Rudi, who had been trained by Schrenck-Notzing as a purely 'scientific medium' from the age of eleven, the complication that he himself might quite understandably decide to cash in on his ostensible unusual gifts, did not arise; but the possibility is plainly always there. The problems arising from the rarity of such persons are all too obvious from the Schneider case. Unless there is harmony among the different groups of investigators, who see themselves as having a common interest, there is here a permanent source of potential disaster. Not only is there the ever present opportunity for obtaining automatic credit as a critical person for exposing the medium, in addition there is also the temptation to score off rival researchers by unmasking a medium that a rival has vouched for.

Unfortunately such 'sociological' pitfalls of unorthodox investigation, of which there are a good many, are further aggravated by the elusive nature of the alleged phenomena and their tendency to weaken and decline as time goes on. In the case of the Schneider investigation, as is usual, the phenomena decreased in vigour and quantity over the years, so that an ever-greater number of sittings were entirely negative. There is no reason to suppose that ever-greater sophistication and vigilance in control methods was responsible since, among other things, *some* phenomena persisted and were attested by some of the most critical of later researchers. On the whole, the gradual attenuation of psychic manifestations is universally observed. It is therefore quite possible that a later experimenter may fail to find paranormal phenomena, not because he is a better observer but because the phenomena have ceased, or become so weak and sporadic as to amount to the same thing; a medium may have taken to 'helping things along' not necessarily because (s)he always was a fraud but because the effects have now become so attenuated that cheating is resorted to so as to preserve the credibility of the earlier and authentic effects, or to retain all the gratifying attention and other benefits that have accrued from earlier glories.

By the time the Price scandal broke, Rudi's phenomena had already waned to a considerable extent. How far the attendant inevitable upset contributed to the totally negative results of the subsequent Besterman and Gatty investigation cannot now be decided.<sup>87</sup> But it is not at all impossible to suppose that a gross breach of trust such as that committed by Price (on any interpretation) would be bound to affect Rudi profoundly, and anything affecting the medium might, for all we know in our present state of ignorance, affect the phenomena. A medium is thus multiply at risk.

<sup>87</sup> T. Besterman and O. Gatty (footnote 14).

Furthermore, the evidence such as it is suggests that what is required in the case of 'physical phenomena' is an atmosphere of boisterous jollity in which participants throw off their normal restraints and inhibitions. Now unfortunately this is not the best possible set of conditions in which to observe in an impartial, cool, critical and dispassionate spirit, nor are the most impeccable scientists necessarily gifted at creating situations of uproarious and rather simple-minded fun. On the other hand, we know that Price was peculiarly talented at promoting the sort of atmosphere at which phenomena were quite likely to be observed; see, for example, the comments of Lord Powis in sub-section 8.2 above. Without injustice, Price might be described as having had the defects of his virtues in this regard: no one could have described him as scrupulous, meticulous, inhibited, modest or restrained. It would be too easy, and in any case question-begging, to suppose that staid, careful and scrupulous people inhibit results because they prevent fraud, whereas uninhibited extroverts are apt to obtain them because they cheat, or make cheating easier. The Rudi investigation shows that this is not an adequate description of what is apt to happen.

Supposing that a general lack of inhibition and restraint is conducive to authentic phenomena, this presents obvious enormous practical problems for careful observation. Instrumental registration becomes indispensable, and the general control conditions must be such that those participating in the experiments can let themselves go without fear of their being deluded or duped. It may well be that such letting go is of great importance for obtaining positive results: at the same time, it may also well be that scientific and academic discipline may tend to impair people's ability to be good psychological promoters of psychical phenomena in this sense. These factors need to be explicitly faced in this context.

On a more theoretical level, it may be attractive and convenient to suppose that everything is what it is and not some other thing, and that our thinking about things does not in itself make any difference: such a supposition may, however, be erroneous. It may be that, not only through our overt, though possibly subtle, behaviour as well as through our inward attitudes we can affect the world around us; in fact, this is one of the hypotheses under consideration when we investigate the paranormal! We may not rule it out *a priori* without unscientific dogmatism. We are thus faced, in the case of parapsychology, with a peculiarly difficult version of the 'experimenter effect'. At the heart of the subject there lies a psychological complementarity that certainly requires close scrutiny: we must face the possibility that our attitudes affect what really happens in some direct way.

Another related problem that has to be tackled is what is sometimes called the unconscious nature of 'psi'. Although 'unconscious' is both ambiguous and misleading, the fact remains that in general those associated with these phenomena do not experience themselves as being responsible for them. In Rudi's case this ostensible secondary personality 'Olga' (a co-conscious person in Morton Prince's sense)<sup>88</sup> considered that 'she' was moving and knotting handkerchiefs and 'going into the [infra-red] ray'. Rudi, so far as anyone was ever able to show, was totally unconscious of Olga and her paranormal

<sup>88</sup> Morton Prince, *The dissociation of personality* (1905, New York: Longmans & Green).

doings. This means, among other things, that, for phenomenological intents and purposes, an experimenter may be faced with two different personages with different temperaments and proclivities. It was 'Olga' that experimenters had to court and please to produce phenomena: if people, for example, refused to sing 'her' songs or play 'her' music *she* would refuse to move any objects. (Schrenck-Notzing in particular tended to go on strike in this respect, only to find that, as a punishment, his seances were apt to be totally blank when it most mattered to him that they should demonstrate results.) In other words, the researcher is faced with problems that are characteristic of psychiatric situations and psychological experimentation in a particularly acute form: he is dealing with individuals with likes and dislikes, and a will and caprice of their own. Although the scientist may be investigating ostensibly physical effects, these are, whatever interpretation be adopted, mediated by some psychological agency.

Only the crudest behaviourism would fail to distinguish between the movement of physical objects in accordance with physical forces, and the goal-directed actions of persons. In order to interpret the acts of persons we need, among other things, an appreciation and understanding of the function of movements. Nowhere is there a more dramatic substantiation of this philosophical point than when we are endeavouring to interpret the ostensible paranormal movement of physical objects. On the face of it, the Schneider phenomena were produced by a personification called and calling herself 'Olga' for purposes of her own, such as showing off, pleasing and impressing favoured experimenters, doing as she was asked generally. This personage, though inaccessible to Rudi, had some degree of control over the alleged phenomena. At the same time 'her' sophistication was very limited: for example 'she' at first did not have the least understanding of her apparent impact on Osty's infra-red installation until this was explained to her in very simple terms, and it seems quite astounding that 'she' should not at any time have picked up Price's growing hostility and willingness to destroy Rudi rather than allow him to be investigated by Hope: there is no hint in any of the numerous accounts of sittings before and after the 25th Price seance that she had any idea of what he was hatching. One might have thought that ordinary sensitivity to atmosphere without paranormal talent, or a fairly rudimentary sense of self-preservation, would have been sufficient to signal some warning. It is most interesting that there is no hint of this kind. On the face of it, the paranormal talents of such sub-personalities seem to be specialised; but to date we have little knowledge of how to categorise, group or predict such abilities. There is some evidence that 'Olga' could see in the dark and move objects, none that she could read thoughts or even be responsive to the most violent (though unexpressed) feelings; yet a boisterous atmosphere of laughter and singing was apparently conducive to paranormal performance.

15.3. *Ethical questions.* That all sorts of ethical issues arise out of investigations in unorthodox fields goes without saying. This general topic has been discussed elsewhere at some length.<sup>89</sup> The most fundamental ethical issue arises, in my view, out of the need to face the basic methodological issue. It is,

<sup>89</sup> Anita Gregory, 'Ethics and psychical research', *JSPR*, 47 (1974), 283-305.

I believe, obligatory for those engaging in research in these heterodox fields to make it clear and explicit whether (so far as they know consciously) they would be willing to grant the authenticity of such phenomena should they encounter them. To pretend to embark on an unbiased enquiry and profess willingness to be convinced, whilst being wholly unwilling to find a particular set of data, is, and should be, clearly seen to be unscientific duplicity rather than scientific tough-mindedness. That this raises difficulties goes without saying: but why should one expect moral problems to be simple?

In fields of enquiry which lie outside the main body of accepted knowledge there is, inevitably, far less by way of accepted conventions regulating conduct to colleagues and to experimental subjects. There is no sphere of human activity in which Price's double-dealing (even on the kindest of interpretations) would be explicitly acceptable from an ethical point of view. On the other hand, the very fact that an enquiry deals with officially discounted phenomena facilitates conduct which, in any other context, would be subject to scrutiny and to universal criticism.

In such a field, as in others, mutual confidence tends to spring up between groups of workers with similar standards such that A will trust B but not C. Since the phenomena being investigated are not readily repeatable (which means that they are unreliable rather than that they necessarily do not happen) there is also a greater danger of the perpetuation of prejudices than in areas where with sufficient training, care and control, manifestations can readily be produced, or at least found. Individuals and groups of psychical researchers are apt to have *a priori* prejudices about what types of phenomena they will and will not countenance. For example, the Sidgwicks who were, deservedly in most respects, immensely influential in the field of psychical research, tended to throw the full weight of their prestige behind a repudiation of the so-called physical phenomena, so that, despite Mrs. Sidgwick's arrogant contempt for Harry Price, the latter could count on the unilateral scepticism against physical phenomena supported by Mrs. Sidgwick to lend maximum impetus to his denunciation of Rudi.<sup>90</sup> There is reason to believe that Price had no intention whatever of undermining either the physical, or even most of Rudi's, phenomena. Yet a consequence of his action, almost certainly, was to finish the topic for a generation of researchers.

It is no doubt a special temptation for those who risk their academic reputations by engaging in unorthodox fields to reassure themselves and the academic community of their continued sanity by disallowing certain phenomena which somehow seem particularly implausible, so as to enlist support for those that do seem to them worthwhile and acceptable. However difficult it may be to avoid such a temptation—indeed even to be aware that one is in danger of succumbing to it—it is essential to be fully alive to it. Not only does such conduct offend against the basic openness and impartiality of scientific enquiry; it may also, in a field in which we know very little indeed, for all we know preclude some important factor for better understanding. The dangers of academic politics are even greater in heterodox than they are in orthodox domains.

<sup>90</sup> Alan Gauld, *The founders of psychical research* (1968, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), provides details of the great contributions to psychical research of Professor Henry Sidgwick and Mrs. Eleanor Sidgwick, née Balfour.

That subjects of psychological investigation and experimentation (human and infra-human) are entitled to a certain consideration is now universally recognised. In parapsychological research such protection is at least as essential: the account of the phase of Rudi Schneider's mediumship given above is sufficient to show what can happen if some basic human considerations are omitted. Part of the danger arises from the ambiguous light in which such a subject is apt to be seen, varying from super-human talented demi-god to cunning fraudulent charlatan, *via* pathological abnormal specimen. Such stereotyping may lead to unjust and brutal treatment of the experimental subject.

The case also illustrates dramatically the ethical and human problems that arise out of collaboration between professional and qualified people with one set of standards, values and objectives on the one hand, and interested and quite possibly more knowledgeable amateurs subject to no such discipline and restraints, and whose objectives may be wholly different. In a field of uncertain status such collaboration will inevitably be much more frequent, and hence pose these problems more often and more dramatically.

15.4. *Recording and communicating of results in unorthodox fields.* The very fact that a field is heterodox implies that the status of the expert is ambiguous. In an accredited and well-established discipline there are authorities on a given topic or subject area who, however controversial they may be within the field, yet command a certain respect in virtue of their training and standing. There is also a fairly clear line of demarcation between investigators and popularisers—or investigators as researchers and investigators as popularisers. Moreover, as time passes, conventions grow up as regards recording and publication of findings.

In a field which is not clearly established, then the question who is and who is not an established and credible authority is, from the very nature of the case, inevitably in dispute. Not only will there be rival factions with deep divisions as regards belief, standards and methods, there will also tend to be somewhat different reference groups in different countries. For example, in the case of the Schneider investigation, transatlantic investigators were on the whole perfectly willing to throw out the work of Germans such as Schrenck-Notzing without much ado, whilst respecting the work of British researchers, including Price. The British scene, as has been shown, was deeply divided between the Society for Psychical Research (which was and probably remains the nearest approach to an established learned society in this field), and Harry Price's National Laboratory of Psychical Research. Both had their officers, councils, meetings and publications. All the people involved had, in a sense, amateur status: the fact that, for instance, Professor Fraser-Harris was an eminent biologist, or Professor Pollard an authority on engineering, or Lord Rayleigh an important physicist, or Dr. Brown a well-known psychiatrist and hypnotist, gave them *some* claim to be qualified to conduct aspects of a research programme in psychical research, but it did not automatically bestow the title of expert. Perhaps the only professional psychical researcher at that point was Dr. Eugène Osty, whose *Institut Métapsychique International* was *reconnu d'utilité publique* and financed by the French state. Harry Price was a successful retired businessman, who through extensive flamboyant and highly

publicised researches certainly had some claim, if one wishes to be fair, to be considered as an authority on the subject.

As has been indicated, collaboration between people of disparate standards and loyalties is apt to be a difficult matter. When it comes to the question of recording, communicating and publishing results, such problems may, and in this case did, become explosive. It has been shown how catastrophic was the failure to circulate seance reports as soon as possible after the relevant seances to all participants. This, in effect, left it open to Price to doctor what he published to an indefinite extent; but no one at the time, however hostile to him, seems to have questioned the accuracy of his reports. Vater Schneider had seen the importance of instant recording and signing for his son's reputation, and by the time Hope and Rayleigh conducted their investigation, the procedure was standardised: all seance reports were circulated to and agreed by all participants as soon as the official note-taker's manuscript had been typed, and a point was made of doing so within a day or two. (A set of these typed notes is in my possession.) The publication in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* is based on these notes, and compiled by Lord Charles Hope, individual sitters having added their comments, observations, interpretations, reservations, and so on.<sup>91</sup> It is the very high standard in this respect that probably makes the Hope-Rayleigh investigation one of the most important ever conducted in the field of psychical research. Osty's was certainly more original and adventurous; indeed, the Hope investigation is in a sense merely a confirmation of aspects of Osty's. But Osty's policy as regards publication was explicitly not to enumerate and involve individual participants and provide detailed records: he wished to get away from the whole unholy cycle of accusation and counter-accusation. His wish in this respect is understandable, but as his brush with Price over the participation of Mitzi showed, his omission rendered him somewhat vulnerable to attack. The Hope-Rayleigh report, though it was utterly eclipsed at the time by Price's denunciation and may only be fully appreciated now, over 40 years later, remains a scholarly and scientific document of more than historical interest.

Perhaps the most obvious publication problems arise for those involved in the scientific exploration of the so-called paranormal because of the notoriety value of the subject matter. Price, though a clear example of one who enjoyed and exploited this aspect to the full, is far from alone in this respect. His case is, however, an ideal illustration. Examples given included his brush with Osty over the papers on Mrs. Helen Duncan's teleplasm, which Price, not to put too fine a point on it, had had stolen for him at a seance from which he had been excluded; his violent clash with Brown whom he pressured into committing himself in the *Times* and then accused of courting publicity; the publication of his popular book *Rudi Schneider*, in which he made it plain that he considered himself to have made an epoch-making set of observations; and his *Bulletin IV*, in which he provided his evidence of fraud against Rudi Schneider a few years later. It is plain that the issue in all cases was public acclaim and notoriety as well as claim to scientific priority and respectability.

Who, in the case of a joint venture, should determine on the format and timing of publication? To whom should the credit go? Which should have

<sup>91</sup> C. Hope (footnote 13).

priority: a cautious and careful scientific account, or the stirring popular claim to proofs of new (or ancient) marvels? What, with respect to recording and responsibility for publication, are the relative roles, rights and duties of the organisers of an investigation, and the experts consulted? What the Schneider investigation made abundantly plain is the need for explicit agreement and conventions that are made clear to all involved right from the beginning of a research project. Matters of confidentiality, publicity, records and publication cannot be left unformulated and at the mercy of the most enterprising and possibly least scrupulous of all those participating. At the same time, it is of obvious importance to preserve and encourage the enthusiasm and enterprise of capable, energetic and knowledgeable workers in this, as in any other, field, and not to discourage them by too many restrictions, too much galling anonymity, and an unrealistic denial to them of the more worldly incentives. It is no easy matter to achieve such a balance; yet such is all too clearly essential for success.

15.5. *Some psychological aspects of Price's fraud.* The whole question of deliberate fraud in science has received relatively little attention, although there has been some recent discussion.<sup>92</sup> In psychical research the topic of fraud has always been of major importance and interest because of the very obvious need for vigilance against marvels manufactured by wonder workers; and it is precisely the precautions against deception ranging from gross fraud to the most subtle and unconscious self-deception that constitute a great part of the psychical researcher's expertise. This is not the place to examine the topic of mediumistic fraud which, as has been mentioned, ranges from carefully prepared artifice to unconscious compliance with group suggestion. The issue is rather that of deliberate experimenter fraud, which also has received more attention in the context of parapsychological research than in other fields: indeed, it is among the most frequently discussed issues, precisely because of the methodological problems discussed. Because of the acceptance of the inherent implausibility of the authenticity of these phenomena, as conditions have been tightened up, it is more and more the experimenters who tend to come under suspicion and from time to time such a fraud is actually discovered by fellow researchers, proved and admitted.<sup>93</sup> The Price-Schneider episode is unusual in that it is the exposure of the medium rather than the production of paranormal phenomena that can be shown to be fraudulent. Either an accident was exploited to reach a false and irrelevant accusation, or else—and this is far more probable from the evidence—a very careful falsification of the evidence was staged. I hope I have shown how it could have been, and probably was, done.

Some of the reasons will also have become apparent: for example, Harry Price's anger against various other researchers and determination to discredit their work rather than be deprived of the monopoly of acclaim he considered his just due. Price was a businessman by origin and a publicist by inclination. He saw an investigation as an entrepreneurial transaction from which he

<sup>92</sup> I. St. James-Roberts, 'Cheating in science', *New scientist*, 72 (1976), 466–469.

<sup>93</sup> For example, J. B. Rhine, 'A new case of experimenter unreliability', *Journal of parapsychology*, 38 (1974), 215–225.

expected credit and acclaim. To him the experts whom he consulted were more like specialists hired by an industrialist. If they confirmed what he had engaged them for, well and good, they were prestigious scientific experts, subsidiary to himself but still of some importance; if, on the other hand, they developed views of their own and, worse, attempted to impose restrictions and qualifications on the conclusions he wished to publish to the world, they had only themselves to blame if he disposed of them in any way that he saw fit. Indeed, the very fact that he *could* discredit them by sleight of hand no doubt proved to his own satisfaction that he was a better expert on fraud and its discovery than they. Only Osty and probably Hope came near to suspecting something of Price's machinations: they were ultimately frustrated by not having available the actual photographic plates and by not having access to the evidence of quite monstrous double-dealing contained in his archives.

Price counted on others not to construct any very detailed plans such as table 2 in section 8 above, displaying exactly what he had said and written and to whom and when, not to scrutinise his published plates too closely, and not to recall with detailed precision just what had happened minute by minute about a year previously at particular seances. He could count on the privacy of his archives, the British laws of libel and slander, the universal prejudice against the phenomena, and his own supreme conjuror's skill at deflecting attention, to protect himself against being found out, certainly from having his fraud brought home to him.

It would, I think, be a mistake to see Price as solely motivated by the quest for popular glory and notoriety. He also longed for scientific status and respectability; he saw himself as an expert, a pioneer in a new field, an innovator. Almost alone among the investigators of Rudi Schneider, he was without academic training or professional standing; yet he knew himself to be more knowledgeable and experienced in psychical research matters than many if not most of them, and very much their superior in tactical shrewdness—in what he would probably have called something like practical commonsense and a working knowledge of human nature. Why should they receive glory and credit for his work and expertise? Why should they be in a position to relegate him to a status of relative unimportance when he was, in his own estimation, a better man than any of them? Ironically, what he really wanted was to lay the foundations of an academically respectable science of psychical research, to found a university department or similar unit with himself at the head. He may have hoped for an honorary doctorate—not a wholly crazy hope, since the University of Bonn more or less offered him one, together with the Red Cross Medal First Class, although nothing came of it.<sup>94</sup> He may well have hoped for some academic appointment, by-passing the normal university channels.

He had sufficiently good judgment to see that the Rudi Schneider investigation offered the best possible starting point for some academic venture. The relative respectability of the phenomena over a long period, the unblemished record of the medium together with his intellectual limitations and compliance to experimenters' demands, the fact that different teams had made similar observations in different countries, and the non-doctrinal and unspiritualistic

<sup>94</sup> See footnote 35.



aspects of the mediumship, all these contributed to making it as respectable a case as had ever been investigated.

It does not seem that Price himself believed that his action would destroy his own past record as Rudi's investigator, or the Rudi mediumship itself. Indeed, on 24 January 1934 the Senate of the University of London resolved, largely on the strength of the Rudi Schneider investigation, 'that Psychical Research is a fit subject of University Study and Research' while continuing to decline to accept Price's offer of his library equipment on Price's terms.<sup>95</sup> Price himself of course realised with crystal clarity that all he had—at best or worst—shown was that on one occasion when phenomena were supposed to be happening, Rudi had freed one hand; and that this was neither here nor there as regards the overall genuineness of phenomena. However, the scandal arising from his timing and the manner in which he elected to publish his 'discovery' were such as to undermine what he most passionately wanted to achieve. It was a price he was probably willing to pay if *he* was not to be the recipient of the consequent glory: he preferred to risk destroying his cause rather than be relegated to a secondary position.

What is perhaps surprising is that, over the years, Price seems to have forgotten his own part in the discrediting of Rudi Schneider. His last letter, written two days before his death and addressed to Mrs. Goldney, referred to Dr. E. J. Dingwall's rejection of Price's Rudi Schneider investigation:

27 March 1948

... Talk about thrashing a dead horse! It would have been impossible by any means to have secreted an 'accomplice' at the Rudi sittings. The lights were on half the time, door locked or sealed, and similar seances have been held all over the Continent. And how can Dingwall apply that theory to the seances we had with Willi at Munich? You will remember that he and I signed a joint statement that we were perfectly satisfied with the arrangements (*our* arrangements) and that we regarded the phenomena as genuine. And I wonder if D. has forgotten that signed statement he gave me after a Stella sitting (when he was lying on the floor!) to the effect that he saw a bulbous materialisation, attached to an ectoplasmic cord, writhing about near Stella's feet; D. is a strange chap. . . .<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Minutes of the Senate of the University of London, 24 January 1934, 1307/59.

<sup>96</sup> H. Price to K. M. Goldney, 27 March 1948 (KMG).

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